



# BUILDING TEACHER QUALITY

in Baltimore City Public Schools



National Council on Teacher Quality

# THIS STUDY WAS UNDERTAKEN ON BEHALF OF THE 82,866 CHILDREN WHO ATTEND BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

## ABOUT NCTQ

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) is a non-partisan research and advocacy organization committed to restructuring the teaching profession, led by our vision that every child deserves effective teachers.

## PARTNER AND FUNDERS

This project was commissioned by the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland's Education Reform Project as part of its work to ensure that public school children receive an adequate education as guaranteed by the Maryland Constitution. It was made possible by a grant from The Abell Foundation. Additional funding was provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

## THE NCTQ TEAM FOR THIS PROJECT

Emily Cohen, Project Director

Aileen Corso, Valerie Franck and Kate Kelliher



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	4
Executive Summary	5
Hiring, Transfer and Assignment	
GOAL 1. MUTUAL CONSENT HIRING	12
GOAL 2. TRANSFER AND HIRING TIMELINE	18
GOAL 3. EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF TEACHERS	21
Developing an Effective Teaching Corps	
GOAL 4. NEW TEACHER INDUCTION	26
GOAL 5. EVALUATIONS	29
GOAL 6. TENURE	33
GOAL 7. REMEDIATION AND DISMISSAL	36
Working Conditions and Compensation	
GOAL 8. WORK DAY AND YEAR	40
GOAL 9. ATTENDANCE AND LEAVE	44
GOAL 10. COMPENSATION	49
Appendix	55



This symbol appears next to recommendations that require a change in contract language in order to implement.



## PREFACE

This analysis reviews the teacher policies, including state laws, contractual agreements and school board provisions, that impact teacher quality in the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS). Framing this analysis are 10 policy goals for building teacher quality, drawn from research and best practices in the field.

NCTQ wishes to thank its local partner, the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland, which made it possible for us to meet with teachers, principals, parents, union and community leaders. These meetings were critical in shaping our understanding of how policies play out in practice.

Both BCPS and the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) were given an opportunity to comment on the draft of this analysis. BCPS provided factual corrections; BTU did not. The substance of our analysis and any errors in this final report are our own.

To produce this analysis, we took the following steps:

- First, a team of analysts reviewed the district's current teachers' collective bargaining agreement, school board policies and district circulars. We also looked at state laws that might impact local policy.
- We compared the laws and policies in Baltimore and the state of Maryland with those of the other 100 large school districts and 49 states in our 101-district TR<sup>3</sup> database ([www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)). This exercise allowed us to determine where the school district fell along the spectrum of teacher quality policies and to identify practices that Baltimore might emulate. In a number of areas, we also collected new data from school districts that surround Baltimore, its biggest competitors for teacher talent.
- We spoke with students, teachers, principals, parents, community leaders, district administrators and union leaders to understand how policies play out in practice.
- We looked at a range of teacher personnel data to gain a better understanding of the outcomes of teacher hiring, transfer, evaluation, attendance and compensation policies.

We hope that this document serves as a resource for Baltimore parents, teachers, administrators and union and community leaders as the district seeks to improve its teacher policies so that every classroom is staffed with an effective teacher.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of the Education Reform Project of the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland, the National Council on Teacher Quality undertook an analysis of the teacher policies in the Baltimore City Public Schools. Our analysis looks at the teachers' contract, school board rules and state laws. We also collected personnel data from the school system and spoke with teachers, principals, union leaders and district administrators to learn how the policies play out in practice.

The purpose of this study was to identify areas in which better district and state policies and practices might lead to improved teacher quality in Baltimore City, even absent other enhancements such as increased funding or better school leadership.

While Baltimore appears to have made great improvements in the past few years to better align its teacher policies with teacher quality goals, much work remains to ensure that every child has an effective teacher.

Our analysis is framed around 10 policy goals for improving teacher quality. These goals fall under three areas: I.) Hiring, transfer and assignment; II.) Developing an effective teacher corps; and III.) Working conditions and compensation.

### Summary of findings and recommendations

#### I. Hiring, transfer and assignment

##### Site-based hiring

Baltimore City is among only a handful of school districts nationwide that give principals full say over their school's faculty. Starting two years ago, teachers with seniority are no longer entitled to vacancies over their colleagues with less experience. Instead, principals are free to consider all applicants equally, regardless of seniority.

With this authority for principals comes a host of challenges that Baltimore, not unlike other districts (most notably New York) has yet to resolve. Each year teachers' positions are inevitably cut at one school (due to declines in student enrollments or budget cuts) and some of these teachers cannot find positions at other schools. Currently, Maryland state law requires that these unassigned teachers remain on the district's payroll indefinitely. A more workable solution—giving teachers a period of up to a year to find a new assignment before terminating the contract—would require a change in state law.

Other obstacles to improving decisions about teacher assignments include a teachers' contract provision that only tenured teachers with a satisfactory



evaluation may transfer from one school to another. Consequently, principals seeking to avoid keeping a teacher that they do not want may give a teacher a satisfactory evaluation to render the teacher eligible for a voluntary transfer.

Permitting only tenured teachers to transfer likely works against the district's retention goals, as newer teachers dissatisfied in their current assignment may elect instead to transfer to another district, rather than wait the one to three years (now that Maryland has delayed the tenure decision until three years) until they are eligible to transfer to another Baltimore school.

### Solutions

- Relieve the district of any contractual obligations to a “surplussed” teacher who cannot find a new assignment after a year. This would require a change in state law.
- Permit all teachers, tenured or not, satisfactory or not, to be eligible for a transfer.

### Hiring timelines

We identify three factors impinging on Baltimore's ability to staff classrooms with effective teachers.

First, Maryland law gives teachers until mid-July to notify the district of their planned departure, well after the time when most teachers are looking for positions and schools are hiring. This deadline is far too close to the start of the school year and has long posed problems for Maryland's large urban districts.

Another challenge hindering Baltimore is an operating budget that appears insufficiently flexible to absorb a fluctuating student enrollment. As a consequence, the district makes untenable mid-course corrections in school staffing, moving teachers out of their assigned classrooms as late as March. This practice certainly affects students adversely and wreaks havoc on teacher morale.

Adding to Baltimore's challenges, state law permits teachers to retire the moment they are eligible, even in mid-year.

### Solutions

- Offer a monetary incentive to encourage teachers to notify the district by April 1 of their intention to resign or retire. Teachers who notify the district after this deadline should have a portion of their paychecks withheld.
- Change the law both to prohibit teachers from retiring during the school year and to require teachers to notify their districts of their departure plans no later than June 1.



### Recruiting and retaining quality teachers

Baltimore does a good job attracting new teachers with strong academic backgrounds, a teacher attribute that much research shows correlates with teacher effectiveness. In the 2009–10 school year, nearly 50 percent of the new teachers Baltimore hired had graduated from “more” or “most selective” colleges, as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*. However, the city has a hard time keeping these promising teachers. Its districtwide, three-year retention rates stand at 65 percent, a level that should be viewed as unacceptable.

Further, barely half of all teachers remain at the same school for three years. Given this turnover, the principal’s primary job—creating a stable, cohesive staff—is inordinately difficult.

#### Solutions

- Collect data on the reasons why teachers leave the district to teach in another school district or, even more importantly, why they choose to transfer to another school within Baltimore.
- Develop a focused, multi-pronged strategy for improving retention (many features of which are found in this report).

## II. Developing an effective teaching corps

### Supporting new teachers

The Baltimore district, like most others, has long struggled to offer an induction program that helps new teachers gain their footing. Mentoring programs in particular have proven problematic and difficult to administer. Baltimore is in the midst of overhauling its teacher induction program so that all new teachers will have access to a mentor and weekly professional development with teacher leaders. It remains to be seen whether this latest innovation will offer a solution.

#### Solutions

- Reinvent mentoring. Considering dedicating current resources to employ a full-time, limited-term mentor to work in the classroom for the first eight weeks of school (perhaps an effective teacher who would delay retirement from June until October). Reduce a new teacher’s course load for the first semester to reduce anxiety and provide time to observe successful classrooms.
- Adopt a policy that prohibits principals from assigning new teachers to the toughest classes (e.g. 9th grade standard courses).

### Supporting struggling teachers

Baltimore principals receive almost no guidance on how to help struggling teachers improve. Further, the district neither sets nor recommends a



deadline limiting the period when long struggling teachers may participate in an improvement plan. The district needs to ensure that struggling teachers who do not show improvement cannot continue an additional year. While in other districts the improvement plans can be almost so rigid as to tie principals' hands, Baltimore's hands-off approach is not an appropriate solution.

### Solution

- Articulate more detailed supports for teachers on an improvement plan and how long the improvement plan should last.

### Teacher evaluations

A Baltimore school board policy that requires all teachers to be annually evaluated is largely ignored: Only half of teachers were evaluated in 2008–09. Still, Baltimore principals appear to be conducting the teacher evaluations that they do administer more conscientiously than previously. In 2008–09, Baltimore principals identified nearly twice as many teachers as unsatisfactory as in 2007–08, increasing from 1.4 to 2.6 percent. This far exceeds the average in other districts, where the rate is less than 1 percent.

Baltimore will have to rewrite its evaluation instrument to meet new state board of education regulations requiring that 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation be based on student growth.

### Solutions

- Develop a team of independent evaluators with content expertise to conduct random teacher evaluations; this practice will validate (or show as invalid) individual principals' evaluations.
- Require principals to identify annually, without any attached consequences, those teachers they consider to be in the top and bottom 15 percent of their staffs.

### Tenure

As in almost all districts in the United States, the decision in Baltimore to grant tenure to a teacher is largely decided on the basis of years in the classroom and not on a teacher's demonstrated effectiveness. Nine out of 10 teachers in the city earn tenure, even though economists suggest that the rate should be closer to three out of four in order to substantially impact the district's student achievement growth.

### Solutions

- Create a process that would require a principal and teacher to appear before a tenure review board in consideration of tenure.
- Develop a tenure tool kit to assist principals in making informed and deliberate tenure decisions.
- Reward teachers who earn tenure a significant increase in pay, the largest pay increase in their careers.
- Aim to deny tenure to the bottom-performing 25 percent of nontenured teachers each year.





### Exiting ineffective teachers

Much national attention given of late (including by President Obama) has focused on districts' inability to fire a teacher, with laws in all states, including Maryland, that result in a protracted and costly process. Accordingly, teachers who are simply ineffective but who have not committed a crime or moral infraction are rarely fired.

According to the BCPS, the teachers union tends to appeal all dismissal decisions. Therefore, the district's legal team only processes dismissals where the principal has carefully documented teacher performance deficiencies and where each procedural step was followed. Baltimore officials estimate that they annually attempt to formally dismiss only 20 of the district's 4,400 tenured teachers due to ineffectiveness. While most of those decisions are ultimately upheld, the process is long and protracted and can be appealed at least twice.

No school system can expect to build a quality teacher corps if its personnel policy largely depends on firing ineffective teachers by way of a difficult ordeal. The best way to build a strong corps is by hiring strong candidates in the first place and taking tenure decisions seriously. However, a system that never fires a teacher for being ineffective sends all the wrong signals to the teaching force, particularly that the district is largely indifferent to employee performance.

#### Solution

- Revise Maryland law to permit only one appeal of a district's dismissal decision.

## III. Working conditions and compensation

### Work day

Baltimore's work day is 30 minutes shorter, on average, than that in surrounding districts. Furthermore, Baltimore elementary teachers have less planning time than their peers in nearly all of the districts in NCTQ's 101-district TR<sup>3</sup> database. One consequence of the shorter work day is inadequate planning time for teachers.

#### Solution

- Lengthen the teacher on-site work day to give teachers more planning time without reducing student instructional time.

### Leave and attendance

At 15 sick leave days a year, Baltimore teachers receive two more days of sick leave than those in surrounding districts. The 15-day base is 30 percent more than the average sick leave provided by the 101 large districts in the TR<sup>3</sup> database.



In addition to a relatively generous leave package, the teachers' contract permits teachers to "buy back" both any unused leave each year and unused leave not previously bought back upon retirement. Only 20 percent of TR<sup>3</sup> districts offer both options—and none is as generous as Baltimore. In the 2008–09 school year, the annual buy-back benefit cost Baltimore nearly \$2.5 million. Because teachers can qualify for this benefit even after taking 75 percent of their leave, two-thirds of teachers received some payment.

### Solutions

- Reduce the number of sick leave days from 15 to 10 to align with the national average for school districts.
- Allow only teachers who have taken no more than three days of sick leave to qualify for the buyback.

### Compensation

Baltimore's teacher salaries are not competitive with surrounding districts. The disparity may be particularly problematic in light of salaries in Washington, DC, where the most effective teachers may earn over \$100,000. Even among other Maryland districts, Baltimore City is not competitive. For example, over the course of a 30-year career, Baltimore teachers earn \$140,000 less than teachers in Anne Arundel County and \$400,000 less than teachers in Montgomery County.

Like most districts nationwide, Baltimore does not reward teaching excellence. Instead, it bases raises on years of experience and the attainment of advanced degrees, not a teacher's impact on student performance. Baltimore spends more than \$30 million a year to compensate teachers for graduate coursework, even though research shows that advanced coursework does not make teachers more effective in the classroom (with the exception of graduate coursework taken by secondary teachers in their content area). The appendix summarizes this research.

### Solutions

- Change the structure of raises to tie teacher salaries to their responsibilities in a school and their effectiveness in the classroom.
- On a small scale, reward the system's consistently great "star" teachers with considerably higher salaries of \$100,000 or more (not bonuses).
- On a large scale, reward bonuses to teachers who produce great results in a given year.
- Increase salaries and earnings potential so that Baltimore is more competitive with surrounding districts.



## Conclusion

This document lays out a blueprint for reform by highlighting the key areas needing improvement and proposing recommendations to make such improvement. Many of these recommendations require a change in state law or contract language. However in several areas Baltimore can independently improve its practices impacting teacher quality without changing formal policy. Inaction cannot be blamed solely on policy roadblocks. This report challenges state policy makers, union and district leaders and the community at large to continuously push for reforms and demand improvement in their children's education.



## HIRING, TRANSFER & ASSIGNMENT

### Indicators that the goal has been met

- i. Teachers who lose their current teaching assignment actively apply for a new assignment, regardless of whether they are transferring voluntarily; have lost an assignment through a program change, enrollment shift or school closing (i.e., are “excessed”); or are returning from a long-term leave or layoff.
- ii. Principals and/or school committees are authorized to select those applicants they wish to interview and have the final say over who is hired.
- iii. Teachers who have lost their current assignment and prove unsuccessful in a year’s time in obtaining a new assignment are terminated.
- iv. When positions must be cut, whether due to a surplus or layoff, teacher performance should be a key factor in deciding who stays or goes.

### I. Hiring

Baltimore stands out among other large school districts, both in giving principals the full authority to staff their schools and making teacher assignments seniority neutral.

Baltimore has taken major steps in recent years to give principals more authority over both their budgets and faculties. Teacher assignment is no longer determined by seniority, meaning that when vacancies become available, more-senior teachers have no advantage over junior teachers (although nontenured teachers, the most junior teachers in the district, are not eligible for a transfer). Principals are no longer obligated to accept teachers who want to transfer into their schools or whom the central office needs to place.

Baltimore was able to give principals this authority without negotiating the change with the union because, according to a Maryland State School Board opinion, the substantive aspects of teacher assignments are under the discretion of the superintendent and not a subject of union bargaining.<sup>1</sup> It does not appear that other school districts in the state have asserted this authority.

Baltimore is among a handful of districts nationwide that have eliminated forced placements of teachers. Based on data from 101 large school districts in the TR<sup>3</sup> database, 56 districts give their principals some say in whom they take into their buildings. In most of these 56 districts, however, principals have this authority only for part of the hiring season, or it applies only when teachers seek to transfer voluntarily. In nearly all of these districts, teachers who remain unassigned after a certain date are “force placed” by

## GOAL #1

Teacher assignment is based on the mutual consent of principals and teachers, with policies that minimize the deleterious impact of excessing and layoffs.



<sup>1</sup>Maryland State School Board opinion 06-25

the district's human resources office. In Baltimore however, regardless of whether teachers are new to the district, transferring voluntarily or transferring because their positions were cut at other district schools, the principal decides whom to hire.

While principals for the most part view this placement process as a big improvement, teachers give it mixed reviews. Teachers are skeptical of the district's voluntary transfer fair. Teachers NCTQ interviewed described the fair as a "stampede," adding that they felt pressured to accept the first job offered. Although principals can invite teachers to their schools for more formal interviews, many principals stated that they feel pressured to "scoop up" a seemingly good candidate on the spot at the fair. Interviewed union leaders had a different perspective and asserted that principals often do not attend these fairs, sending representatives instead.

Moreover, teachers reported that the transfer fair was poorly advertised. One said that it was "easy to miss," since the date changes each year, and that there are relatively few vacancies announced at the fair.

## II. New hires

Despite Baltimore's success at raising the caliber of its prospective teacher pool, principals feel that their choices are too limited.

Baltimore gives principals authority over hiring teachers, but due to budget cuts over the last two years that resulted in fewer teachers leaving the system and thus fewer vacancies, the district limited principals' authority to hire candidates they find on their own. Half of new teachers were brought in from Teach For America (TFA) and the Baltimore City Teacher Residency (BCTR), a program run by The New Teacher Project. Both programs require that the district commit to hiring a certain number of teachers up front. The district recruits a smaller portion of international teachers, primarily to teach hard-to-staff subjects, such as math and science.

While these alternate route teachers tend to have strong academic backgrounds and therefore hold promise for being effective, some principals we interviewed were frustrated that they could not recruit and hire teachers from other sources. In essence, they complained, all new hires must first be pre-approved by the central office.

---

*"I could find the LeBron James of teachers but wouldn't be able to hire him. I can't hire from outside the system."*

– Baltimore principal

---

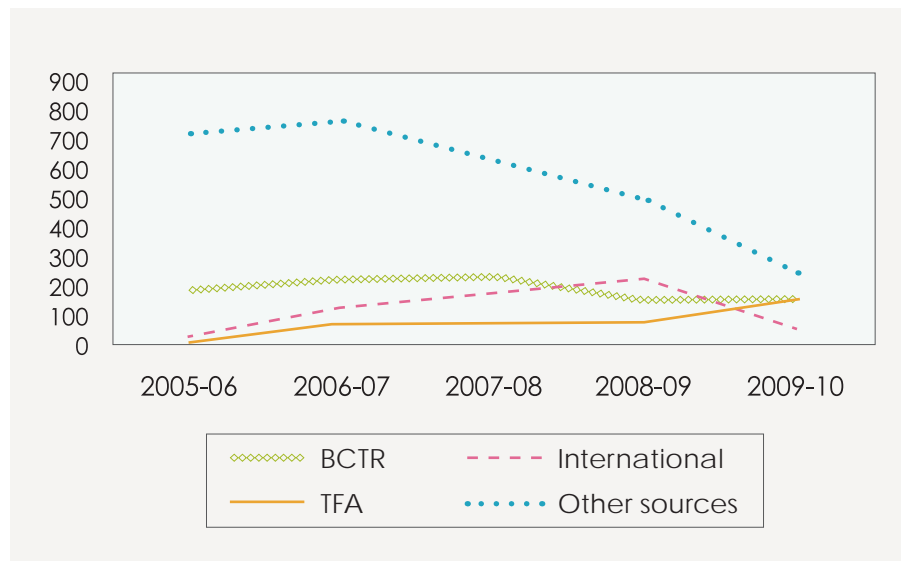
*"To obtain a voluntary transfer, you either have to know someone or know where to look."*

– Baltimore teacher



Baltimore charter schools are different. They gain flexibility in hiring teachers from outside the district applicant pool by finding ways to classify positions to skirt district hiring rules. For example, they might advertise for “college readiness teachers” instead of guidance counselors.

### Sources of new hires



Source: NCTQ calculations based on data provided by the Baltimore City Public Schools.

*Baltimore has hired many fewer teachers overall in recent years, with the proportion of those from Teach For America increasing most appreciably.*

### III. Transfer limitations

Baltimore’s teacher contract places unnecessary restrictions on which teachers are eligible to transfer.

Current transfer rules favor tenured teachers, work to the disadvantage of non-tenured teachers and serve as a disincentive for principals to evaluate teachers accurately.

#### PROBLEM 1

**Only teachers with a satisfactory evaluation can transfer.**

Teachers rated as unsatisfactory on their end-of-year evaluations cannot transfer voluntarily or be surplussed. Consequently, a principal may not evaluate a teacher as “unsatisfactory” even if he or she is not performing well. Instead, principals often give a satisfactory evaluation in exchange for the teacher’s agreeing to apply for a transfer.

By way of comparison, only about a third of the TR<sup>3</sup> districts prohibit transfers for teachers with unsatisfactory ratings. A handful of districts permit teachers with negative evaluations to transfer, but require the consent of both principals.

“Surplusing” refers to the elimination of a position at a school due to a school closing, program change or decline in student enrollment. Surplussing differs from a layoff in that it results from routine changes among schools in a district. Surplussed teachers have a right to a new assignment at another school while those who are laid off have no such right.



## PROBLEM 2

Only tenured teachers are eligible for a transfer.

Because only tenured teachers can voluntarily transfer (a restriction only a few other districts in the TR<sup>3</sup> database impose), new teachers who find themselves in poor or incompatible assignments often prefer to leave the district (either permanently or temporarily) rather than wait to become eligible to change schools. Interviewed teachers stated that many teachers simply leave the district rather than wait two years to transfer to a new assignment. Unless this policy changes, this problem is likely to increase, since Maryland has increased the probationary period until tenure from two years to three.

*“To transfer schools in Baltimore, you essentially have to leave the system and reapply to the district a year later.”*

– Baltimore teacher

## PROBLEM 3

Principals are notified if one of their teachers wishes to transfer voluntarily.

While previously both the current principal and the receiving principal had to approve a teacher’s transfer, this policy is no longer in place. However, a teacher’s current administrator is still notified if a teacher applies for a voluntary transfer, which makes for a potentially uncomfortable working environment.

## How teachers are hired and assigned positions in Baltimore City

DESCRIPTION	PLACEMENT	CHALLENGES
New hires		
District pre-approves all hires.	Principals determine school assignment.	Principals may not recruit and hire teachers other than the pre-screened recruits who have a contract with the district.
Voluntary transfers		
Gives teachers already employed by the district an opportunity to change positions.	<p>Principals interview and hire teachers seeking a transfer.</p> <p>Although teachers apply online during a two-week period in March, the informal “courting process” begins earlier in the school year, when principals anticipate having an opening.</p> <p>Those wishing to transfer can also attend a district-sponsored voluntary transfer fair, where they interview for positions and may be chosen by a principal.</p>	<p>Only tenured teachers with a satisfactory evaluation may transfer voluntarily.</p> <p>Teachers are not formally notified when the voluntary transfer process begins.</p> <p>Principals are notified if a teacher on their staff applies for a voluntary transfer, making for a potentially uncomfortable working environment.</p>
Involuntary transfers (surplus)		
Can be initiated by a principal or the district.	Principals interview and hire surplus teachers. Teachers without an assignment are placed in administrative or co-teaching assignments.	Occasionally, surplus teachers work as the teacher of record, rather than as a co-teacher.



## IV. Unintended consequences of Baltimore's transfer rules

Surplussed teachers who cannot find a new assignment may stay on the payroll indefinitely.

Under a policy that gives principals the authority to decide who can teach in their building, it is inevitable that some teachers surplussed from their schools cannot find jobs elsewhere in the district. For example, of the 156 teachers surplussed at the end of the 2008–09 school year, roughly a third had no position in the fall of 2009. Rather than place such teachers in permanent assignments without the principals' consent (as almost all districts do), Baltimore tries to place them in temporary assignments as a co-teacher, for example, who supports the teacher of record. In such cases principals need not include these positions in their school budgets; instead, the salaries are “carried” by the district. Teachers who cannot find temporary assignments work in support positions, usually in the central office.

At the school level there appeared to be a great deal of confusion about how to use surplussed teachers assigned to schools. These teachers are supposedly assigned to work as co-teachers or in support capacities. However, occasions arise when these teachers, although carried by the district, are effectively serving as primary teachers. This practice enables principals to staff classrooms without budgeting for them.

Unless a principal decides to retain a surplussed teacher who has been temporarily placed in his or her school, these teachers are usually directed to register for Baltimore's annual voluntary transfer fair to again try to secure a new assignment. Principals expressed concern that eventually the district will be forced to shift the costs of surplus teachers who cannot find new jobs from the central office budget to individual school budgets. Such concerns are unlikely to subside unless the state limits the time a teacher can remain on a district's payroll without an assignment. Otherwise, Baltimore will spend increasingly large amounts to meet its salary obligations to teachers unable to secure a new position, or the district may be forced to return to its practice of assigning teachers to schools without the principal's consent.

### Recommendations for Baltimore City Public Schools

#### 1. Include teachers in school personnel decisions.

Under school-based budgeting, Baltimore schools already have a significant say over staffing. Including teachers in staffing decisions, such as allowing them to sit on interview committees, would help build collegiality within schools and improve morale.

2. Create a team of central office observers to evaluate surplussed teachers placed in non-school-based, temporary assignments and to validate principal evaluations of surplus teachers working in their schools.





### 3. Remove restrictions on transfers.

Baltimore should make all teachers eligible for a transfer, regardless of tenure status or past performance. In addition, the district should notify a principal that a teacher in his building is leaving only after the teacher has secured a new assignment.

## Recommendation for Maryland

**Enable districts to terminate the contract of any teacher who lacks a permanent school-based assignment after one year.**

This would enable the district to have an “exit strategy” for surplus teachers who are unsuccessful in securing a permanent assignment. *Baltimore can look to Chicago Public Schools and to the Washington, DC contract for strategies on exiting unassigned teachers.*



# GOAL #2

## Indicators that the goal has been met

- i. Budgets, enrollment and staffing projections are completed in early spring, before the transfer season begins.
- ii. Policies require retiring and other non-returning teachers to provide notice to schools before the transfer season begins.
- iii. Transfers are prohibited during the school year, except in unusual circumstances.
- iv. A teacher's assignment is decided by the end of the school year or early in the summer, whether the teacher is transferring within or entering the district.
- v. The process through which teachers learn about vacancies and apply for them is electronic, centralized and user-friendly.

## Hiring and transfer timeline

In staffing schools, Baltimore does an inadequate job anticipating enrollment fluctuations.

Schools inevitably face turnover each year as teachers retire, change positions or transfer to new schools. Some change is invigorating, but high turnover over successive years harms schools. Principals need to be able to build strong, stable faculties. Instead, in many districts nationwide principals are constrained by arcane hiring processes that favor certain internal candidates over the needs of schools. Teachers, too, can be handicapped by a process that is not transparent, limits their choices and drags into the summer.

Districts and schools must be able to anticipate vacancies. A key component for predicting staffing needs is policies that encourage clear and honest communication between teachers choosing to resign or retire and their principals. Such policies enable schools to make most assignments before the current school year ends, so that planning for the new school year can occur during the summer.

Additionally, districts must be able to project student enrollment adequately, anticipating fluctuations in school enrollments and staffing patterns. While this is particularly difficult in a district that, like Baltimore, is undergoing significant restructuring and facing competition for students from charter and transformation schools, it is critical that such projections be made as early and as accurately as possible.

## GOAL #2

The transfer and hiring timeline occurs early enough in the school year to minimize disruption to schools, ensuring that the district has access to top talent.



## PROBLEM 1

The deadlines for teachers to notify the district of their plan to resign or retire are too late.

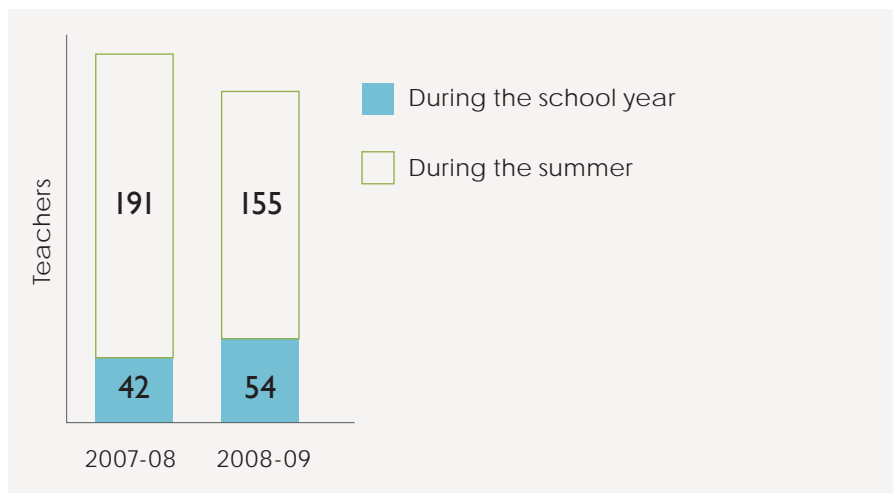
Baltimore school board rules require teachers who are resigning to notify the district by May 1 if they are non-tenured and by July 15 if they are tenured (July 15 is also the state's deadline). Having recognized that the July 15 date unnecessarily burdened school management, the central office now requires all teachers (and all employees) to complete a "declaration of intent" by April 25th to notify the district of their plans to retain a position. This practice appears ineffective. In 2009–10 only 113 teachers notified the district of plans to resign and 85 teachers of plans to retire, well short of the 500 notices that are normally submitted. Some interviewed teachers explained that if they did intend to leave, they would prefer to not notify the district ahead of time, so as not to create an uncomfortable situation with their principal in the remaining months of the school year. Others said that they do not know of their plans as early as April because they are waiting on job offers from neighboring districts.

## PROBLEM 2

Permitting teacher retirements during the school year is unnecessarily disruptive for schools and students.

In 2007–08 and 2008–09, about a third of the Baltimore teachers who retired did so *during* the school year. Their positions were most likely filled by substitutes rather than permanent teachers. Such departures pose real hardships on schools and students.

### When Baltimore teachers retire



Source: NCTQ calculations based on data provided by the Baltimore City Public Schools.

*"If you plan to leave the district, or your school, you better keep your cards close; you don't want to get screwed."*

– Baltimore teacher

### PROBLEM 3

The district makes adjustments in staffing at unacceptable points in the school year, disrupting schools, hurting students and wreaking havoc on teacher morale.

Decreasing student enrollment, budget cuts and school-based budgeting contribute to significant staffing fluctuations among schools. Somehow, Baltimore City is unable to absorb these fluctuations. This past year, the September 30th state-mandated enrollment count revealed dramatic changes in student enrollment that required some principals to revise and resubmit their school budgets. The ensuing staffing adjustments were delayed until January, months after schools had settled into their school year routines. Consequently, the district was forced to surplus more than 200 teachers during winter and early spring, removing teachers from their schools well into the second semester (as late as March). The negative impact of removing a teacher from the classroom four to six months into the school year is well known.

### Recommendations for Baltimore City Public Schools

#### 1. Incentivize teachers to notify the district by April 1 of their intention to resign or retire.

Establishing an earlier resignation or retirement notification date would enable Baltimore principals to anticipate vacancies more accurately in order to plan staffing for the following year. Teachers who notify early and ultimately leave the district should receive a \$1,000 bonus. All teachers, regardless of when they notify of a resignation or retirement, would have access to health benefits through the summer months. *Baltimore can look to Washington, DC, as an example of how to incentivize early notification of retirement or resignation.*

#### 2. Fine teachers who notify of their departure after the state deadline, as permitted by state law.

The law provides that these teachers can have a portion of their final paychecks withheld.

### Recommendation for Maryland

Implement a financial penalty for teachers who retire during the school year.

Allowing teachers to retire during the school year (except for a true emergency) is disruptive to student learning and limits schools' staffing options. The current penalty—suspending a teacher's certificate—is of no consequence as a retired teacher generally no longer needs a teaching certificate.

### Proposed timeline for the spring transfer and hiring season:

#### JANUARY - APRIL

District human resources recruits teachers for critical subject areas and offers general contracts.

#### MARCH 15

Teachers are notified if they are losing their assignments (surplussed).

#### MARCH 15 - 30

All internal candidates, including voluntary transfers and surplussed teachers, may apply for vacancies. Schools interview and can hire, but are not obliged to choose, an internal candidate. In addition, internal candidates may continue to apply for vacancies after the end of the transfer season.

#### APRIL 1

Early notification deadline for resigning teachers, with bonus attached.

#### APRIL 1 - JUNE 15

Schools interview any candidates they wish, including transfers, and offer positions. Ninety percent of openings are filled by the end of the school year.

## Indicators that the goal has been met

- i. The district recruits teachers with high “academic capital,” measured by such factors as the selectivity of teachers’ undergraduate institutions, SAT/ACT scores and having passed licensure exams on the first attempt.
- ii. The percentage of minority teachers employed by the district is proportional to the minority composition of its student population.
- iii. Schools have low proportions of new teachers on their staff.
- iv. The district monitors teacher turnover and retention rates by school to ensure that high-poverty schools do not suffer disproportionately from high rates of teacher turnover.

## I. Attracting and Recruiting Quality Teachers

Baltimore is doing a good job of attracting new teachers with strong academic backgrounds.

Although districts compile data on the percentage of “Highly Qualified Teachers” (HQT) at each school to comply with federal law, this designation says little about the actual quality of teachers.<sup>2</sup> Other data points are better predictors of teacher effectiveness, though no single factor can predict with full reliability whether a teacher will be effective.

The Illinois Education Research Council found that the following measures, which it called indicators of “academic capital,” were linked to a teacher’s ability to produce academic gains among students: the selectivity of a teacher’s undergraduate institution, a teacher’s SAT or ACT scores, and the number of attempts by a teacher to pass the state licensure exams.<sup>3</sup> In other words, teachers who were themselves good students tend to be good teachers.

Baltimore does not collect all of the necessary data to enable a similar analysis. The district only recently began to collect data on undergraduate institutions for all district teachers. A third of all Baltimore teachers graduated from “more selective” or “most selective” institutions, as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*, with newer teachers comprising a greater proportion of such teachers.

## GOAL #3

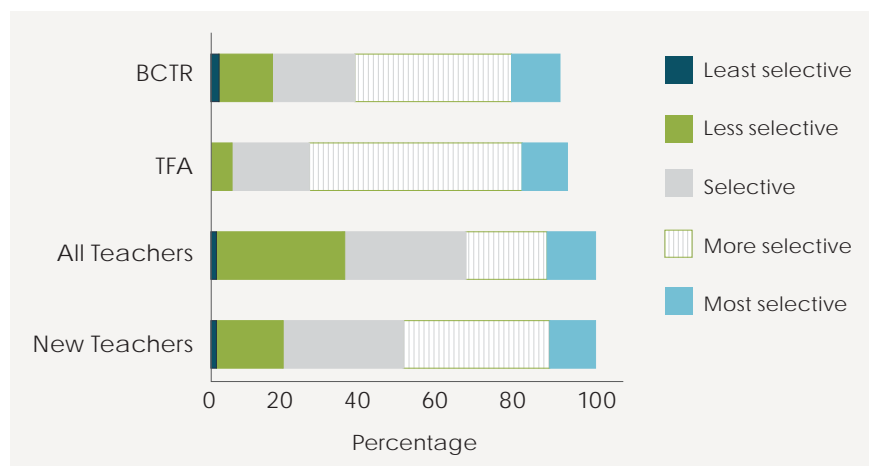
The district works to improve the “academic capital” and diversity of new hires and ensures that its teacher talent is distributed equitably among its schools.



<sup>2</sup>Teachers meet HQT requirements by being certified in the subject or subjects they teach, by passing a test in their subject matter or by being found qualified through the state’s HOUSSE route. This route has been widely criticized for offering a loophole enabling veteran teachers to bypass requirements to demonstrate subject-matter knowledge.

<sup>3</sup>Bradford R. White, Jennifer, B. Presley and Karen J. DeAngelis, *Leveling Up: Narrowing the Teacher Academic Capital Gap in Illinois* (IERC [Illinois Education Research Council] 2008-1). 2008.

## Percentage of Baltimore teachers employed in the 2009–10 school year who graduated from top colleges and universities



Source: NCTQ calculations based on data provided by the Baltimore City Public Schools.

*Thirty-four percent of all Baltimore City Public School teachers graduated from “more selective” or “most selective” colleges and universities. For teachers hired to teach in the 2009–10 school year, that proportion was nearly 50 percent, much of it attributable to the strong credentials of Teach For America teachers.*

## II. Fostering school stability

Although Baltimore equitably distributes its inexperienced teachers among schools, the district’s retention rates are worrisome, particularly in schools serving the students with the greatest need.

### District and school retention

Only two-thirds (62 percent) of the teachers who worked in Baltimore in the 2006–07 school year were still working in city schools in 2008–09. However, only half of those teachers (56 percent) were still working at the *same* school, a troubling sign of instability in the district. Furthermore, teacher retention rates decline with the number of low-income students in a school; more affluent schools in Baltimore keep their teachers much longer than those serving poorer students.

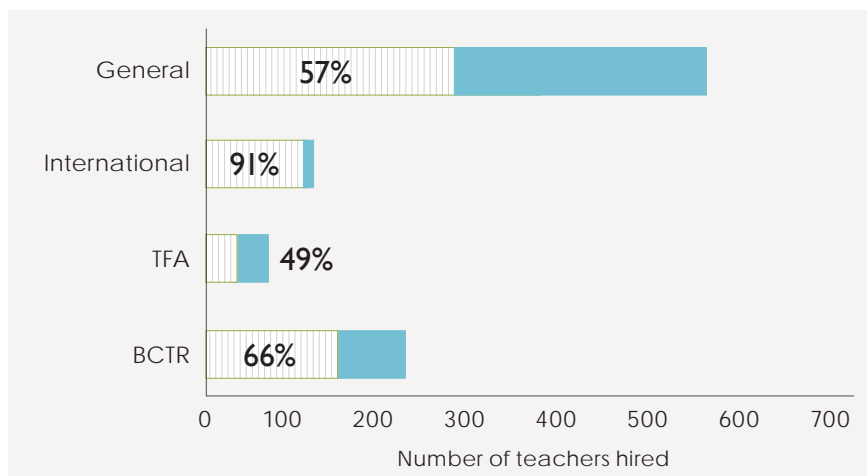
### Teacher retention rates

SCHOOL POVERTY RATE	3-YEAR RETENTION RATE
0-50%	81%
50-75%	67%
75-85%	53%
85%-95%	53%
95%-100%	45%

Source: NCTQ calculations based on data provided by the Baltimore City Public Schools.

NCTQ also calculated retention rates for international teachers and teachers hired through Teach For America and the Baltimore City Teacher Residency to see how they compare with the district average.

## Percentage of teachers hired in 2006–07 who remained teaching in Baltimore three years later



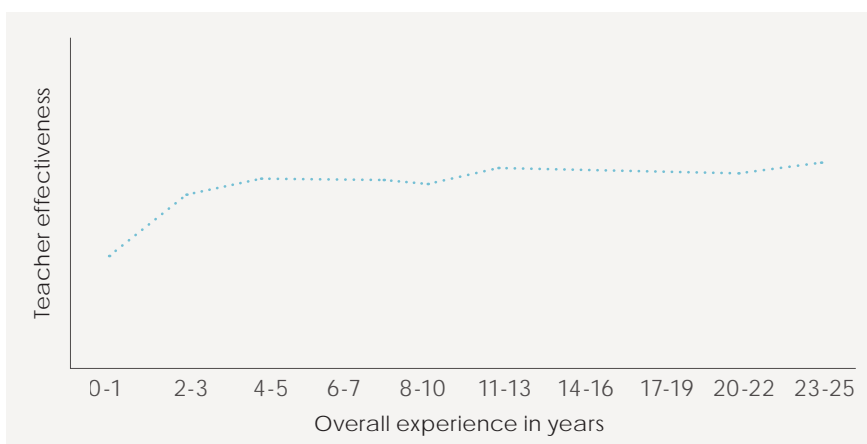
Source: NCTQ calculations based on data provided by the Baltimore City Public Schools.

*The length of each bar represents the total number of teachers in each cohort hired in 2006–07. The lighter portion represents the percentage of that cohort still teaching three years later. Teachers coming through the Baltimore City Teacher Residency program are the most likely to stay in the classroom, with 66 percent of them staying at least three years.*

## Inexperienced teachers

Not surprisingly, a large body of research shows that teachers in their first year are considerably less effective than others and that second-year teachers, while having markedly improved, are not as effective as they will be. However, most teachers are about as effective as they ever will be by about their third, fourth and fifth years of teaching.

## Impact of teacher experience on student learning



Source: Goldhaber, Hansen<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>D. Goldhaber and M. Hansen, *Assessing the Potential of Using Value-Added Estimates of Teacher Job Performance for Making Tenure Decisions* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2009).

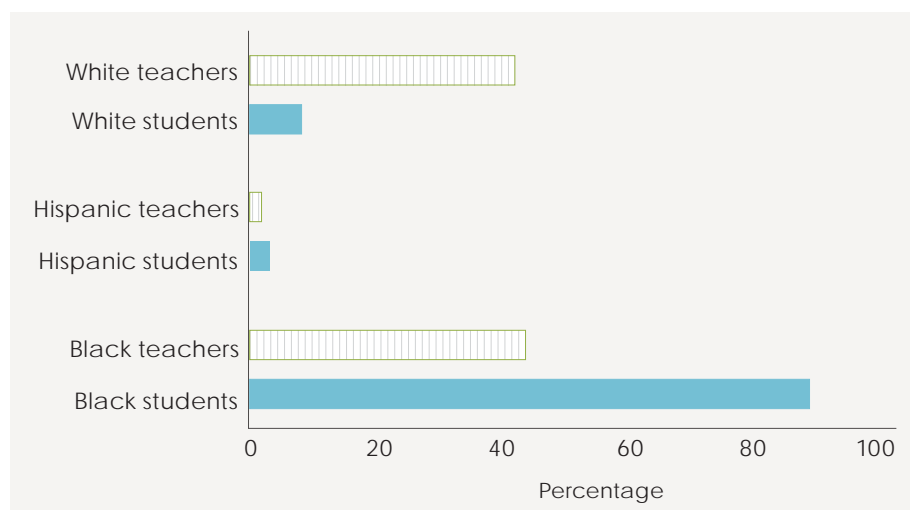
In Baltimore, less experienced teachers (those in their first and second years) are generally distributed evenly among schools. In other words, the district's poorest schools (a relative term, because the district's overall poverty rate is high<sup>5</sup>) do not employ a disproportionate share of novice teachers. This may in part be because nontenured teachers (those in their first or second year) cannot transfer. Even though poorer schools tend to have higher turnover, they are filling vacancies with a combination of new and transferring teachers, not just novices.

The only notable pattern regarding the distribution of inexperienced teachers is that charter schools, as a whole, tend to employ more teachers at the start of their careers. This is due, in part, to charters' budgeting based on actual, not average, teacher salaries. In addition, these schools often demand longer hours of their teachers, something younger teachers are more likely to accept.

### Attracting a diverse workforce.

Some research finds a marginal benefit from a student having a teacher of his or her own race, especially for Black students.<sup>6</sup> While the United States has witnessed a rapid increase in the number of non-White students in its public schools over the past 20 years, the number of minority teachers has declined, due largely to the expansion of job opportunities for talented minorities.<sup>7</sup> In Baltimore, as in most districts, the number of teachers of color is not proportional to its student population. The district's student population is more than 80 percent Black, while its teacher workforce is approximately 40 percent Black. There are nearly equal percentages of White and Black teachers, even though the White student population is less than 8 percent. A third of TFA and BCTR recruits who began in August 2009 are people of color.

### Diversity of Baltimore's teaching force compared to its student population



Source: NCTQ calculations based on data provided by the Baltimore City Public Schools.

<sup>5</sup> The district has an 83.6 percent poverty rate, according to figures from the free or reduced meal program.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Dee, "The Race Connection," *Education Next*, Spring 2004, 4(2).

<sup>7</sup> *Increasing the Odds*, National Council on Teacher Quality, 2004.



## Recommendations for Baltimore City Public Schools

1. Improve systems to collect and monitor school- and district-level data on teacher experience, retention and academic background.

These data should be reviewed regularly by the central office and published on school report cards.

2. Collect data on the reasons why teachers want to transfer out of a school or leave the district.

These surveys should always be done anonymously, perhaps online.

3. Develop a focused, multi-pronged strategy for improving retention.

Many of these strategies can be found in this report.



# GOAL #4

## Indicators that the goal has been met

- i. New teachers receive regular and consistent support from mentors, with more intensive help provided in the first few weeks of teaching. The district has a minimum time requirement for mentors and mentees to meet, and meeting times are well documented.
- ii. Mentors are assigned before the school year begins.
- iii. Mentors are selected on the basis of their own effectiveness, subject-matter and school expertise, and interpersonal skills.
- iv. Mentors receive specialized training and feedback from mentees on their own performance.
- v. Mentors are compensated for their time.

## Support for new teachers

Too many new teachers in Baltimore City do not receive proper support.

As most new teachers are overwhelmed and undersupported in the first months of their teaching careers, a strong induction program is critical. Unfortunately, a laissez-faire mentality prevails in many schools. Negotiating unfamiliar curricula, discipline issues and a labyrinth of school and district procedures is too often considered a rite of passage that teachers must somehow tolerate.

---

*"I taught in another school district for one year. I never received so much support in my life. I had a mentor, many other support people. Even after I had taught for 10 years, they gave me that support because I was new to the district."* – Baltimore City teacher

---

Baltimore school officials are now overhauling the district's support system for new teachers, acknowledging that the current system does not do enough to ensure that all new teachers will be provided a mentor. This change comes when a new state law also mandates that all new teachers must receive support from a mentor teacher.

## GOAL #4

The district provides all new teachers with an induction program with particular consideration for teachers in schools serving the most challenging students.

While for years Baltimore City offered limited support and professional development for new teachers, many teachers received some help provided they had been recruited through Teach For America and the Baltimore City Teacher Residency. For example, Teach For America teachers are observed at least four times per year, and meet monthly in content- and/or grade-level-specific learning teams.

### School-based mentors

With the shift to school-based budgeting, principals have been granted full authority over staffing, including decisions on whether to hire a full-time mentor.<sup>8</sup> For the 2009–10 school year, the district recommended that principals hire a full-time mentor if at least 20 percent of a school's staff was new to teaching. Of the district's 126 schools, 28 met this criteria, but only eight employed a full-time mentor. (Four schools with a lower percentage of new teachers also employed a full-time mentor.)

Interviewed principals reported that they elected not to hire mentors because the central office budgets the position at a rate higher than that for regular classroom teachers. In effect, hiring a mentor simply costs too much. A 10-month mentor is budgeted at an average teacher salary of \$91,000 (due to a combination of a 4.6 percent stipend and a higher average experience level), while a secondary teacher position is budgeted at an average teacher salary of \$77,000. Consequently, many schools forego having a formal mentor, preferring to informally pay a teacher a stipend for serving as a mentor.

In response, Baltimore changed its guidance for the 2010–11 school year, instituting more options for types of mentoring arrangements. A principal may either hire a full-time mentor (still at \$91,000), pair novice teachers with experienced colleagues or use a school-based staff developer or department head to serve as a mentor. Principals are required to specify at least one option in their school budgets, leaving no option to forego mentoring.

### Teacher Leaders

Also during the 2009–10 school year, Baltimore launched a centralized support network for all teachers regardless of experience, a program that on paper appears quite sound. Similar to the “learning team” approach used in Teach For America, Baltimore has 43 expert teachers who meet with colleagues in small groups during office hours after school.<sup>9</sup> Teacher leaders also open their classrooms for other teachers to observe.<sup>10</sup> These leaders are also supposed to be available for some portion of the regular school day to assist new and struggling teachers. Based on interviews with Baltimore teachers, however, it is not clear how often, if at all, these regular-day meetings actually take place.

Teacher leaders represent most subjects and grade levels, with gaps in such areas as high school math, with only one teacher leader (compared to four for high school government).

In a relatively generous move by the district, Baltimore pays first-year teachers \$30 per hour to attend these sessions with teacher leaders. In the first three months of the program (January through March 2010) on average, 60 teachers attended these meetings each month. Fifty-three percent of those who attended were in their first year, 41 percent were in their second year, and 6 percent had more than two years of experience.

*“I didn’t get any feedback my first year. I don’t care who gives me feedback, whether it is the principal or another teacher, I just wanted something.”*

– Baltimore teacher

<sup>8</sup> Of those schools described in this paragraph, four have 12-month terms and eight 10-month terms.

<sup>9</sup> Teacher leader office hours are held 4:00–6:00 pm Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.

<sup>10</sup> Last year 127 teachers applied to be a teacher leader; 45 were selected. Teachers apply online, submitting a resume and recommendations. If selected for an interview, teacher leader applicants participate in a mock mentor process as part of a group interview. For the 2010–11 school year, applicants will also have to submit a video of their teaching. Teacher leaders receive a \$5,000 stipend.

## Recommendations for Baltimore City Public Schools

### 1. Ensure that all new teachers have access to a mentor.

Whether schools have one new teacher on staff or 10, a mentor is critical for them. Schools that do not have large numbers (e.g., 20 percent or more) of new teachers should still pair first-year teachers with effective, experienced teachers who can serve as mentors. Ideally, these mentors are teaching in the same subject or grade level as their mentee.

### 2. Place new teachers in classrooms physically near the classrooms of teachers who are known to be highly effective.

This strategy is perhaps the most affordable induction model and has been found to be quite effective. Newer teachers are highly sensitive to teacher quality, and the more effective a teacher's nearby peers, the more likely the teacher will produce higher student learning gains.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Adopt a policy that prohibits principals from assigning new teachers to the toughest classes (e.g., 9th grade standard courses).

### 4. Provide a stipend for mentor teachers rather than a separate pay rate/salary scale.

Principals are reluctant to formally budget a mentor position because it costs much more than simply asking a teacher to serve as a mentor within the mentoring teacher's regular pay. Baltimore should also consider reducing the teaching load of teacher leaders to ensure they have the time needed to work closely with new teachers.

### 5. Experiment with alternatives to the current induction model. Strategies that can be considered:

- a. **Reduced teaching loads for at least the first semester.** A smaller load allows new teachers time to gain their footing and master the basics of classroom management. It also gives them more time to observe and consult with accomplished teachers.
- b. **Assign all new teachers a full-time mentor for the first two months of school.** Retired teachers could work as full-time mentors for new teachers for the first two months of school. Providing intensive support in a teacher's early months may be even more effective than providing more distributed assistance over the course of an entire year or two.
- c. **Provide release time to observe accomplished teachers.** Make sure opportunities for first-year teachers to observe accomplished teachers are plentiful in every school.
- d. **Build a video library of high-performing teachers.** Like other school districts and Teach For America, Baltimore could film its high-performing teachers. Incorporating video observations into professional development and mentoring activities would increase the effectiveness of observations, especially if the videos featured Baltimore teachers. These videos could link to the district's website.

<sup>11</sup> C. Jackson and E. Bruegmann, *Teaching Students and Teaching Each Other: The Importance of Peer Learning for Teachers* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2009).

# GOAL #5

## Indicators that the goal has been met

- i. The instrument for formal evaluation considers objective evidence of student learning, including not only standardized test scores when available, but also classroom-based artifacts, such as student work, quizzes, tests, progress in the curriculum and other measures of student learning.
- ii. Teachers receive regular feedback on their performance (through regular, informal observations) and are formally evaluated at least annually.
- iii. Formal evaluations include classroom observations that focus on and document instructional effectiveness. Teachers' observed behaviors are assigned degrees of proficiency based on standards and defined by scoring guidelines.
- iv. Teachers are formally evaluated by multiple observers. Observers may include the principal, outside observers, department heads or experienced teachers. All observers are trained.
- v. The district conducts random observations by observers external to the school to validate the principal ratings.

The Maryland State Board of Education approved a regulation that requires that student achievement make up at least 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation. These regulations will take effect in the 2012–13 school year.

## I. Frequency of observations and evaluations

Despite district rules, only half of all teachers were evaluated during the 2008–09 school year.

Baltimore requires all teachers, regardless of tenure status, to be evaluated annually. This requirement exceeds the requirement set by the state, which generally requires teachers with at least five to 10 years of experience to be evaluated only twice every five years.<sup>12</sup>

As prescribed in Baltimore's policy, evaluations must consist of at least two classroom observations conducted by the principal, assistant principal or a department head. A teacher who has received an unsatisfactory observation must also be observed by at least one other person besides the immediate supervisor. Otherwise, observations by multiple persons are not required.

## GOAL #5

The evaluation of teacher performance plays a critical role in advancing teachers' capability to be effective and serves the district's teacher quality needs.



<sup>12</sup> The state requires new teachers to be evaluated at least twice a year. Probationary teachers must be formally evaluated, including a conference, at least once a semester. The state also requires that nonprobationary teachers holding a standard certificate be evaluated annually. Those holding an advanced certificate must be evaluated twice during the five-year license period, with the first evaluation occurring during the initial year of the certificate (Maryland Board of Education Resolution #1973-49, COMAR 13A.07.04.02).

## Schedule for teacher evaluations in Baltimore City

STEP	DEADLINE
Initial planning conference with principal and development of professional growth plan	October 15
First formal observation	December 1
Interim performance review completed by principal	January 15
Second formal observation	April 1
Annual evaluation	May 1 for an overall unsatisfactory rating; for “satisfactory” teachers, evaluations must occur a week prior to the end of the school year.

While all teachers are supposed to be evaluated each year, this does not happen in practice. During the 2008–09 school year, only 55 percent of teachers were officially evaluated.

The absence of evaluations is harmful for a system trying to create a culture of high expectations and high performance. All employees can benefit from feedback, and annual evaluations are the most logical way to provide it.

Principals are either not completing all of their evaluations or are not turning them in, as required, to the central office. Only five schools (3 percent) turned in evaluations for at least 90 percent of their faculty. Thirty schools (17 percent) did not turn in *any* teacher evaluations in the last school year.

## Percent of teachers evaluated

TEACHERS EVALUATED (%)	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
0	30 (17%)
0-25	1 (0.5%)
26-50	13 (7%)
50-75	105 (59%)
76-90	25 (14%)
≥ 90	5 (3%)

To increase compliance, the district is in the process of creating an online evaluation system so that principals can turn in teacher evaluations electronically. In addition, 2009–10 marked the first school year in which the district collected mid-year performance reviews.

*“After nine years in the system, I went to ‘North Avenue’ to review my personnel file. Apart from the physical required for initial employment, there was only one evaluation on file.”*

– Baltimore teacher



## II. Content of evaluations

Baltimore will need to revise its evaluation instrument in light of the new state law.

New regulations passed by the Maryland State School Board require that 50 percent of teacher evaluations are based on student performance.<sup>13</sup> Baltimore's current evaluation system does not account at all for student growth. Of the four areas of a teacher's work evaluated, none requires that teachers demonstrate that their students have progressed as a result of their (the teachers') teaching. Much of what the observation instrument is designed to assess is removed from what actually occurs in the classroom. While student performance as it relates to teacher effectiveness is supposed to be discussed in pre-observation and growth plan meetings, outcomes are not formally included in the evaluation instrument.

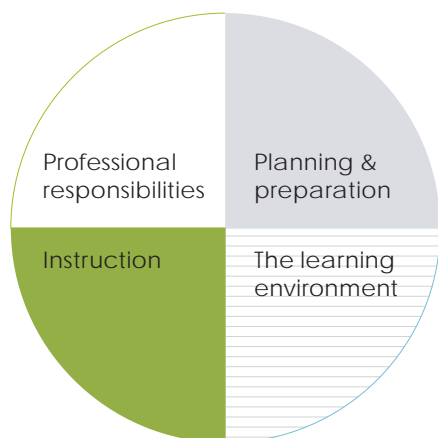
### Incorporating objective measures of student data

While accounting for student performance can be more challenging in non-tested subjects, it is possible. The district can launch this process by assembling working groups of effective teachers representing as many grades and subjects as possible to develop appropriate learning benchmarks under a common curriculum.

### Some possible sources of objective student data:

- Standardized test scores
- Periodic diagnostic assessments
- Benchmark assessments that show student growth
- Artifacts of student work connected to specific learning standards that are randomly selected for review by the principal or senior faculty and scored using rubrics and descriptors
- Periodic checks on progress with the curriculum coupled with evidence of student mastery of the curriculum from quizzes, tests and exams. Evidence may include examples of typical assignments that are assessed for their quality and rigor

## Domains of Baltimore's teacher evaluation



Source: Baltimore City Public Schools

*“Rather than focusing on the depth or relevance or appropriateness of a lesson, for example, evaluators focus on items on a checklist. The reason the whole evaluation and dismissal process is the way it is is because they nitpick for the wrong reasons. It takes forever to find out who the bad teachers are. In the same way we differentiate for children, we need to differentiate for teachers. [These evaluations] demean the profession and make teachers look like cookie cutters.”*

– Baltimore teacher

*“Checklists are something someone could fill out without any students in the room or by someone who wasn't even in the field of education.”*

– Baltimore teacher

<sup>13</sup> “Performance” cannot be defined as solely test scores. No single source may account for more than 35 percent of the evaluation. Districts must choose between more than one test or a combination of tests and student work.



Baltimore teachers earn one of three ratings describing their performance in each of the four domains: proficient, satisfactory or unsatisfactory. An unsatisfactory rating in any domain warrants placement on an improvement plan.

Interviewed principals were frustrated by the structure of the evaluation because it offered no way to distinguish between, for example, a first-year teacher who is progressing, but not yet performing satisfactorily, and a more senior teacher who is barely meeting expectations.

## Recommendations for Baltimore City Public Schools

### 1. Require principals to use the electronic evaluation system to submit teacher evaluation ratings.

The district should know which teachers have not been evaluated each year. It should also be able to easily identify teachers who are routinely found to be performing poorly, regardless of which schools they are working in. The district should similarly be able to identify teachers who routinely perform above expectations. Such a system should go a long way to help the district hold its principals accountable for conducting evaluations.

### 2. Develop a team of independent evaluators to validate evaluation ratings.

Evaluations that regularly incorporate the views of multiple, trained observers (particularly experts in subject areas) allow the district to gauge the robustness of individual principals' ratings. When a principal's observations nearly match those of an outside evaluator, teachers can be more confident that the principal is unbiased and skilled at evaluation. If they do not match, the school district should increase training for principals in performing evaluations. Additional observations and evaluations can be conducted to the degree the district can afford them. Even if only one teacher in a building is checked by a third-party evaluator, principals will take this task more seriously. *Baltimore can look to New York City for an example of the use of peer evaluators from outside the school.*

### 3. Collect and examine student feedback on teacher effectiveness.

While we are not recommending that evaluations from students be part of teachers' formal evaluations, student feedback should be provided to teachers and their principals or department chairs. Students have the most to gain (and lose). Their observations can help teachers improve.

### 4. Require principals to identify annually whom they consider their high- and low-performing teachers.

Principals should report annually those teachers they consider to be in the bottom 15 percent and top 15 percent of their staffs without any consequences. As the district gains confidence in the fairness and accuracy of its evaluations and principals grow accustomed to not rating all teachers as equally competent, the district can adopt strategies to reward top teachers and support (and, if necessary, dismiss) the weakest.

A questionnaire to generate student feedback might look like the following:

#### DIRECTIONS

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Circle one answer.

1. When I work hard in this class, an important reason is the teacher demands it.

STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE  
DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE

2. I don't like asking the teacher in this class for help, even if I need it.

STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE  
DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE

3. The teacher in this class calls on me, even if I don't raise my hand.

STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE  
DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE

4. I have pushed myself hard to completely understand my lessons in this class.

STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE  
DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE

5. If I were confused in this class, I would handle it by myself, not ask for help.

STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE  
DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE

6. One of my goals in this class is to keep others from thinking I'm not smart.

STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE  
DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE



# GOAL #6

## Indicators that the goal has been met

- i. Evidence of effectiveness is the preponderant criterion in tenure decisions.
- ii. Teachers are eligible for tenure after a minimum of four years, when sufficient data become available to make a meaningful decision.
- iii. There is a formal process, such as a hearing before a tenure review panel, to decide whether to award tenure.
- iv. Teachers receive a significant pay increase after earning tenure, perhaps the largest of their careers.

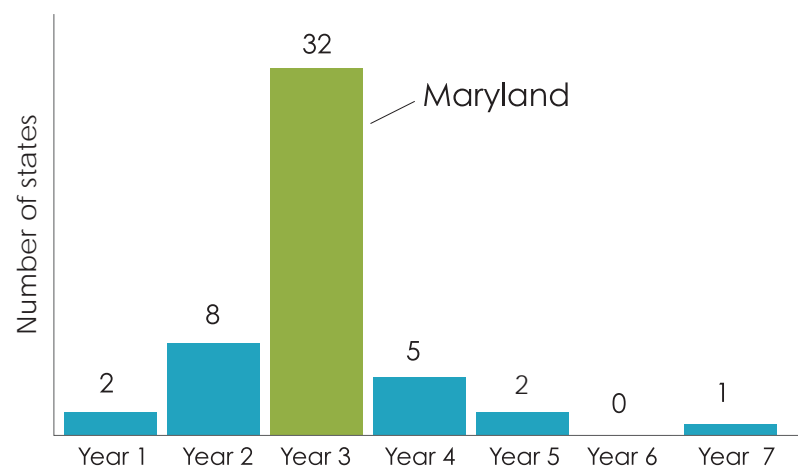
## Making tenure meaningful

Tenure decisions in Baltimore City, as elsewhere, are largely decided on the basis of years in the classroom and not a teacher's effectiveness.

Maryland recently increased the provisional period for tenure for new teachers from two to three years. While this is a step in the right direction, a decision made at the three-year mark is still not optimal, because it does not provide sufficient time to collect enough student data to assess a teacher's impact. (This decision would need to depend on only two years of value-added student data; most assessment experts recommend three.)

Additionally, Maryland school districts no longer have the legal authority to request an additional probationary year for nontenured teachers, an option that Baltimore City regularly used to extend a teacher's probation from two to three years. In the 2008–09 school year, for example, 85 BCPS teachers had their probationary period extended.

## Time period for earning tenure



## GOAL #6

The district requires that tenure decisions be meaningful.

Although Maryland's new law will undoubtedly change some district practices, neither Baltimore City nor any of Maryland's other 23 districts appear to have even given the proper weight to tenure decisions, despite the fact that it represents essentially a \$2 million investment. Maryland law explicitly grants local school boards the authority to determine what qualifications a teacher must have to achieve tenure, but Baltimore has not articulated any additional ones.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Baltimore's school board policy permits teachers to earn tenure as early as after their first year.<sup>15</sup>

Principals may choose not to renew a nontenured teacher for any reason, including poor performance. In the 2008–09 school year, principals did not renew contracts for about 8 percent (110 teachers) of the nontenured teaching force.

Economists examining the value-added performance of teachers recommend that districts would need to routinely dismiss at least the bottom-performing 25 percent of teachers eligible for tenure in order to build a high-quality teaching corps that is capable of making significant gains in student achievement. Denying tenure to the least effective teachers (as measured by their value-added on student standardized test scores) would equate to a district-wide reduction in class size of five students per class.<sup>16</sup> Baltimore (like most districts) falls well short of the rate needed to achieve anywhere near this level of benefit.

## Recommendations for Baltimore City Public Schools

### 1. Develop a tenure tool kit to assist principals in making informed and deliberate tenure decisions.

Such a tool guides principals through teachers' probationary period by organizing a teacher's progress and filing deadlines for denying and granting tenure.

*Baltimore can look to New York City, which has implemented an online "tenure tool kit" to help support principals in making tenure decisions. The number of teachers denied tenure or placed on an extended probationary period more than doubled in the year after New York's tool kit was introduced: from 25 in 2005–2006 to 66. In 2007–2008, 164 teachers were denied tenure, and 246 had their probationary period extended.*

### 2. Hold a tenure review to decide whether to award tenure to teachers.

Tenure should be a significant milestone in a teacher's career and awarded only after deliberate and thoughtful consideration of a teacher's performance. Baltimore should develop a review process in which both the principal and teacher are required to present the cumulative evidence of teacher effectiveness.

<sup>14</sup> Maryland Code 6-201 (f).

<sup>15</sup> Baltimore City Public Schools Board Rules 402.07.

<sup>16</sup> D. Goldhaber and M. Hansen, *Assessing the Potential of Using Value-Added Estimates of Teacher Job Performance for Making Tenure Decisions* (Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2009).

3. Reward teachers who earn tenure with a significant increase in pay, the largest pay increase in their careers.

A meaningful tenure process warrants a salary structure that recognizes a teacher's accomplishments as revealed by the process.

4. Aim to dismiss the bottom-performing 25 percent of nontenured teachers each year.

This strategy would have a significant impact on the quality of the teaching corps as a whole, while adding value equivalent to reducing class size by five students per class.

## Recommendations for Maryland

NCTQ normally recommends that a new teacher have a minimum of four years' probation, so that schools can collect sufficient evidence of effectiveness before awarding tenure. Maryland recently changed its tenure law to require a minimum of three years' probation. Since it is unlikely that the state will revisit this issue anytime soon, NCTQ's recommendation is not made here.



<sup>16</sup> D. Goldhaber and M. Hansen, *Assessing the Potential of Using Value-Added Estimates of Teacher Job Performance for Making Tenure Decisions* (Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2009).

## Indicators that the goal has been met

- A teacher is placed on an improvement plan after a negative evaluation and is eligible for dismissal after two negative evaluations.
- A clear mechanism is in place to assist struggling tenured teachers.
- Observations occur early enough in the school year to provide sufficient time for poor-performing teachers to improve and for administrators to make a decision about a teacher's continued employment by the end of that year.
- Teachers are allowed to appeal a decision for dismissal only once, and such an appeal is made before a panel of educators, not in a court of law.
- Teachers are not permitted to file a labor grievance over a personnel action.

## I. Holding teachers accountable for their performance

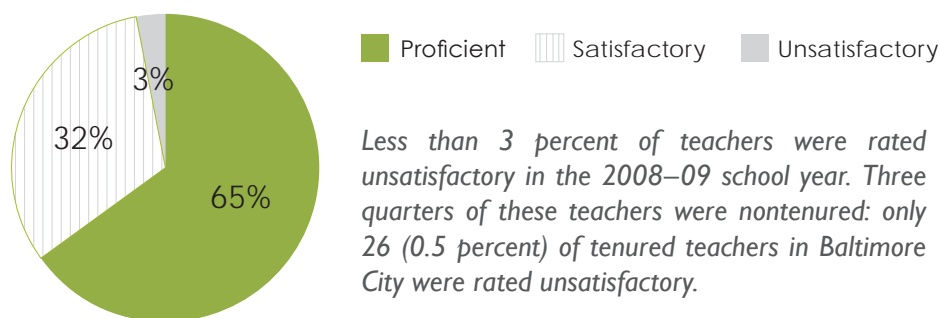
Less than 0.5 percent of Baltimore's tenured teachers are rated as unsatisfactory.

While Baltimore mirrors the practice in other districts where few teachers are found unsatisfactory, it does seem to be taking the process more seriously. During the 2007–08 school year, approximately 1.4 percent of the teacher workforce (tenured and nontenured) was rated unsatisfactory. In 2008–09 that figure nearly doubled to 2.6 percent. In the 2009–10 school year, 8.6 percent were rated unsatisfactory on their interim ratings. In many other school districts, this percentage hovers near 1 percent.<sup>17</sup>

However, almost all teachers rated unsatisfactory are nontenured. For example, 77 of the 103 teachers rated unsatisfactory in 2007–08 were in their first or second year of teaching; only 26 tenured teachers were rated unsatisfactory. If tenure decisions were more deliberative, awarding tenure only to effective teachers, this proportion might be appropriate. That not being the case suggests that principals are giving short shrift to tenured teachers' evaluations.

In this section we examine the rules and regulations for dealing with low-performing teachers, including the improvement plan and what schools must do when teachers chronically underperform.

## Evaluation ratings of Baltimore teachers, 2008–09 school year



*Less than 3 percent of teachers were rated unsatisfactory in the 2008–09 school year. Three quarters of these teachers were nontenured: only 26 (0.5 percent) of tenured teachers in Baltimore City were rated unsatisfactory.*

Source: Baltimore City Public Schools, data for 5,368 teachers in the 2008–09 school year.

## GOAL #7

Teachers who demonstrate instructional deficiencies receive assistance; those who do not improve are dismissed.



<sup>17</sup> In studies of Hartford, Seattle and Boston, NCTQ found that less than one percent of all teachers were rated unsatisfactory; The New Teacher Project found a similar absence of negative ratings in its report, "The Widget Effect," which looked at a sample of 12 school districts.

## II. Support for struggling teachers

### Baltimore to offer little guidance for helping struggling teachers to improve.

A Baltimore City teacher can be placed on an improvement plan any time a principal observes a deficiency or, as discussed above, if s/he receives an unsatisfactory rating in any of the four areas of teacher evaluation.

Interviewed principals noted that they generally reserve the use of an improvement plan for when they are seeking to dismiss a tenured teacher and need formal documentation of that teacher's performance. While principals are not obliged to place underperforming, nontenured teachers on an improvement plan (they can simply choose not to renew a teacher's contract), many do. As of March 2009, 35 percent (98 teachers) of teachers on improvement plans were nontenured.

The evaluation handbook offers little guidance on designing an improvement plan. It states only that the plan must be developed by both the teacher and principal. Although some advantage may result from not specifying the many steps that must be followed (as some districts' rigid requirements make the process prone to grievances), the lack of guidance about the most effective interventions for struggling teachers leaves an unfortunate gap.

The most problematic shortcoming is the lack of a clear deadline for ending a plan. According to the evaluation handbook, teachers can continue in the improvement plan "until satisfactory performance is observed," ostensibly even into the next school year.

Of the 290 teachers on an improvement plan in March 2010, nearly half (138) had been on the plan since at least June 2009. If the principal intends to dismiss a teacher on an improvement plan, notification must occur no later than February.

## III. Dismissing low-performing teachers

### The percentage of tenured teachers who are dismissed for poor performance or resign in lieu of dismissal averages 0.5 percent.

Much national attention has focused of late (including by President Obama) on districts' inability to fire teachers due to a protracted and costly process established in state law. Accordingly, teachers who are ineffective but who have not committed a crime or moral infraction are rarely fired. (New York City school officials, for example, estimate that it takes two years and more than \$200,000 to dismiss a teacher.)

No school system can expect to build a quality teacher corps if the primary strategy largely depends on firing ineffective teachers by way of a difficult ordeal. The best way to build a strong corps is by hiring strong candidates in the first place and taking tenure decisions seriously. However, a system that never fires a teacher for being ineffective sends all the wrong signals to the teaching force, particularly that the district is largely indifferent to employee performance.



Baltimore City dismisses on average about 4 percent of its nontenured teaching force each year and less than 0.5 percent of tenured teachers for poor performance.

Number of Baltimore teachers dismissed each year for “failure to meet performance expectations”

TENURE STATUS	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	AVERAGE
Nontenured	69	51	46	53 (3.8%)
Tenured	27	16	14	19 (0.4%)

*Note: Data is based on approximately 6,000 teachers currently employed by Baltimore, of which approximately 23 percent are nontenured.*

Source: NCTQ calculations based on data provided by the Baltimore City Public Schools.

*It is interesting to note how few tenured teachers resign rather than face dismissal proceedings. One might expect the number of resignations to be higher than that of dismissals, yet only three tenured teachers on average each year elect resignation over dismissal, many fewer than the average of 19 dismissals.*

Dismissal Process

The Baltimore teacher contract stipulates that a principal must notify a teacher receiving an unsatisfactory evaluation by May 1 and that “no unsatisfactory performance evaluations may be issued after that date.” A principal who fails to complete teacher evaluations until after May 1 cannot rate a teacher unsatisfactory.

As it is BTU practice to appeal all dismissal decisions, the district’s legal team only processes dismissals for tenured teachers where the principal has carefully documented teacher performance deficiencies. For example, this year four of the 24 dismissals that principals submitted to the district were rejected because documentation was not sufficiently thorough to substantiate a charge of incompetence.

Once the district’s legal team approves a charge of incompetence, the district sends a dismissal notice to the teacher. After this point, state law dictates the process for dismissing a teacher, a process that is fairly standard nationwide. Maryland law allows a teacher to appeal a district’s dismissal decision twice:

- 1) The first appeal must be filed within 10 business days of receipt of the dismissal notice, with a hearing held 10 to 30 business days after the filing. The hearing officer issues a recommendation to the local school board. The superintendent and teacher then have 10 days to issue an opinion to support or contest the recommendation, and the local school board votes to uphold, reject or modify the recommendation.
- 2) The final order of the board is subject to appeal at the state level, where the state school board renders a decision.



## Recommendations for Baltimore City Public Schools

**1. Articulate more detailed supports for teachers on an improvement plan.**  
Little guidance is currently offered on what options are available to help struggling teachers improve. More detailed guidance for what the improvement plan should comprise would help principals and teachers devise a clear plan of action.

**2. Limit the time a teacher can participate in an improvement plan.**  
The current improvement plan sets no time period for improvement plans. Teachers who have been on such a plan for more than a year or who have received two unsatisfactory evaluations in the past five years should be eligible for dismissal.

## Recommendations for Maryland

**Allow teachers only one opportunity to appeal a dismissal decision.**  
The decision to terminate a teacher should be subject to appeal only before the state board if it would result in licensure revocation. All other dismissal decisions should be final at the local level.



# GOAL #8

## Indicators that the goal has been met

- i. The district's calendar creates time for teachers to work outside the instructional day (and year) to ensure common planning, team collaboration and professional growth.
- ii. Teachers work an eight-hour day on site.

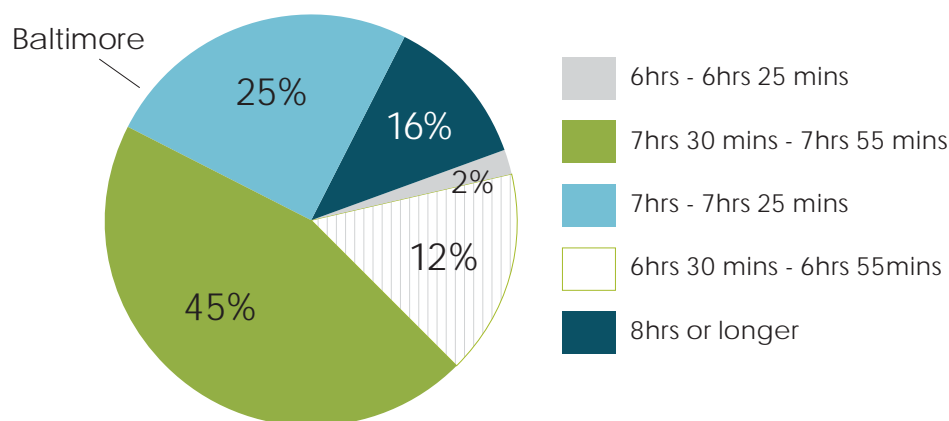
## I. Length and structure of the teacher work day

Baltimore teachers have less planning time than most large districts in the nation.

The work of an effective teacher goes far beyond direct contact with students in class. Excellence in teaching involves planning, preparation, evaluation of student work, collaborating with colleagues and parents and working with students individually. Yet the current structure of the work day in Baltimore—and in most American school districts—does not meet the demands of the profession.

With students present during 75 percent of a teacher's workday, Baltimore teachers have little time to plan lessons, collaborate with peers or meet with students individually. The 7-hour, 5-minute contractual day for teachers is only 25 minutes longer than the elementary student's school day and 15 minutes longer than the secondary student's day.

## Length of an elementary teacher workday in TR<sup>3</sup> districts



Source: NCTQ TR<sup>3</sup> database.

*Although 16 school districts mandate an 8-hour work day for teachers, it is unclear whether most teachers in these districts regularly work this schedule. This policy may simply enable districts to have afterschool meetings and permit teachers to meet with students outside class periods without having to formally negotiate such meetings in the teachers' contract, as tends to occur in districts with a shorter official workday.*

## GOAL #8

The schedule and duties assigned to a teacher support the teacher's ability to be effective.



Although most American school districts operate under a similar schedule for teachers, this school model differs radically from those in highly successful American schools, such as the KIPP charter schools (Knowledge is Power Program), and in high-performing nations, such as Singapore and Japan. For example, teachers in Japan are with students only 60 percent of the day; the remaining time is spent mostly planning lessons, collaborating with other teachers and meeting with students.<sup>18</sup>

Baltimore City's work day is 30 minutes shorter, on average, than that in surrounding districts. Baltimore's elementary teachers have less planning time than those in surrounding districts; in fact, they have less planning time than teachers in 90 percent of the 101 districts in NCTQ's TR<sup>3</sup> database.

The length of the work day has been a controversial issue in Baltimore. Last year, the union filed a grievance against the KIPP Ujima Village school, though no KIPP teachers were party to the grievance. The union asserted that the schools' teachers should be compensated for the extra time demanded of KIPP teachers. KIPP teachers were making 18 percent more than teachers in traditional schools, but the union asserted they should be making 34 percent more. A compromise was reached in which KIPP agreed to pay teachers 20.5 percent more than the standard BCPS salary.

### The work day for Baltimore elementary teachers and surrounding school district teachers

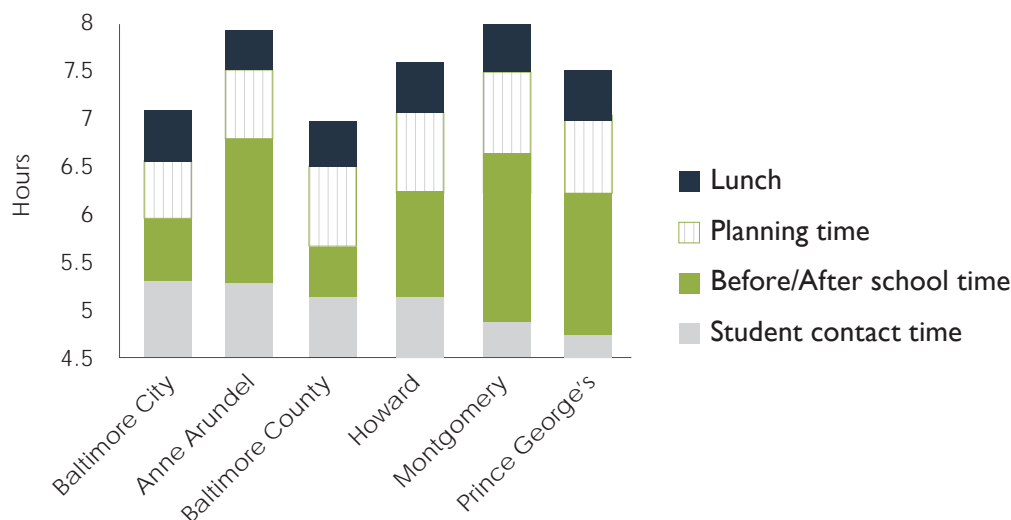
DISTRICT	DAILY PLANNING TIME	PERCENTAGE OF DAY WITHOUT STUDENTS
Baltimore City	1 hr, 1 min	25%
Baltimore County	1 hr, 20 mins	26%
Howard	1 hr, 55 mins	32%
Anne Arundel	2 hrs, 12 mins	33%
Prince George's	2 hrs, 15 mins	37%
Montgomery	2 hrs, 36 mins	39%

*The planning-time calculation is based on the average daily planning time provided during the student instructional day in addition to the difference between the teacher work day and student instructional day.*

Source: Baltimore and surrounding districts contracts.

<sup>18</sup> H. Stevenson and J. Stigler, *The Learning Gap: Why Our Schools Are Failing and What We Can Learn from Japanese and Chinese Education* (New York: Touchstone, 1992).

## Teacher time without students in Baltimore and surrounding school districts

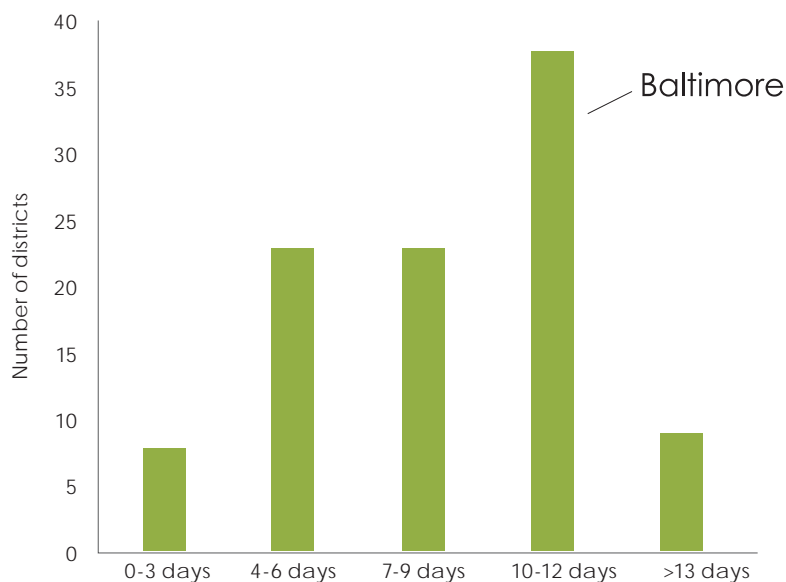


Source: Baltimore and surrounding districts contracts.

*In Baltimore City the only time without students is a 45-minute lunch period, a 45-minute preparation period (normally occurring four times a week) and 15 to 25 minutes before and after the school day.<sup>19</sup> Baltimore's shorter on-site teacher work day is largely due to minimal time-on-site requirements before and after the student instructional day.*

While Baltimore teachers have less planning time during the day than those in nearby and other urban districts, Baltimore teachers have a comparable amount of non-student preparation days throughout the year. They receive 10 planning days during the work year, about the same as in most school districts.

## Annual planning days for districts in TR<sup>3</sup> database



*Baltimore teachers receive 10 days of planning during the work year, similar to most other districts.*

<sup>19</sup> Secondary teachers are required to be on site for 15 minutes beyond the student instructional day; elementary teachers are required to be on site for 25 minutes beyond it.

## Recommendations for Baltimore City Public Schools



### 1. Lengthen the teacher work day.

The teacher on-site work day should be 8 hours, the standard in most professions and the case in 16 districts in TR<sup>3</sup>. Alternatively, the district and union could at least give schools the flexibility to extend their teacher work days. The district should offer guidance on when such model should be put in place—in the case of a low-performing school, for example.



### 2. Provide teachers with more planning time.

Elementary teachers are particularly shortchanged. Ideally, teachers have at least 225 minutes of planning time a week.



# GOAL #9

## Indicators that the goal has been met

- Sick leave is commensurate with the number of months a teacher works per year (e.g., a 10-month contract provides 10 days of sick leave).
- Teachers are required to personally notify the principal or his/her designee of each absence.
- Principals (and central offices) have access to data on teacher absences on a monthly and annual basis.
- The district requires medical documentation for habitual use of sick leave and can require additional documentation from a doctor (other than the teacher's) should sick leave abuse be suspected.
- Attendance is a factor in teacher evaluations.

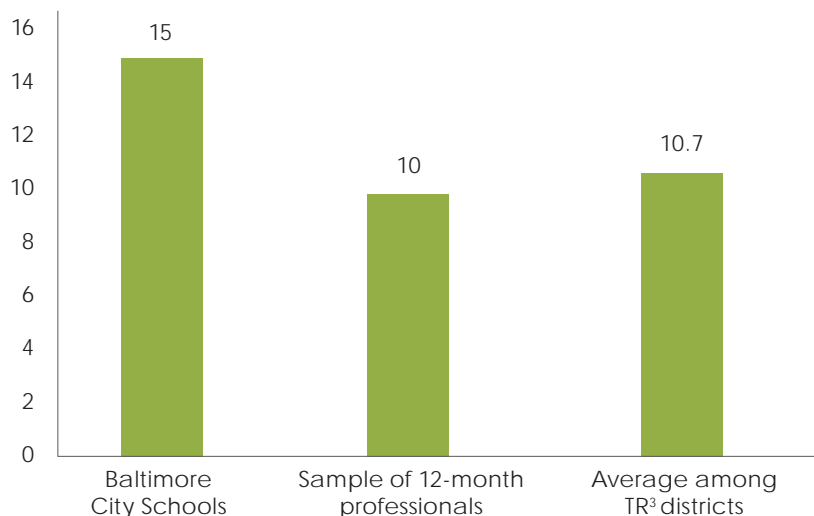
## I. Sick leave policies

Baltimore teachers receive 30 percent more sick leave than most teachers nationwide.

Baltimore teachers are allotted 15 sick days and one personal day annually; three sick days can also be used as personal leave.<sup>20</sup> Baltimore teachers receive two more days of sick leave than teachers in surrounding districts and 30 percent more than teachers in the nation's largest school districts.

While sick leave is an accommodation provided in most professions and teaching should be no exception, abuse of sick leave is a real problem in many schools, with a negative impact on student performance.<sup>21</sup>

## Sick leave granted in comparative samples



Source: Baltimore 2009–10 teachers' contract, Bureau of Labor Statistics and TR<sup>3</sup> database.

## GOAL #9

Policies encourage teacher attendance, minimizing the deleterious impact of teacher absences.

<sup>20</sup> First- and second-year teachers receive only 10 days of sick leave. In the third year, 10 additional days are credited to each teacher's sick leave accumulation.

<sup>21</sup> One study found that every 10 teacher absences lower mathematics achievement by the same amount as having a new teacher instead of a more experienced teacher. C.T. Clotfelter, H.F. Ladd and J.L. Vigdor, *Are Teacher Absences Worth Worrying about in the U.S.?* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2007).

In addition to 16 days of leave (15 sick and 1 personal) are 5 additional professional days (available for individual professional development, separate from the 10 days the district builds into the teacher work year for professional development for district and school defined purposes), 2 religious leave days and 5 bereavement days.<sup>22</sup> Leave for these purposes does not carry over from year to year.

Baltimore City makes only a limited effort to control leave abuse. Personal leave on the day before or after a holiday and on the last two student days of the year must be approved by the principal. Baltimore City teachers can take sick leave on up to three occasions before they must provide a doctor's note. For example, even if a teacher is absent five days in a row, a principal has no authority to ask for a doctor's note unless it is the third reason, or as Baltimore terms it— "occasion", that the teacher has been absent. Twenty percent of districts nationwide permit principals to request a doctor's note after three days of absences; another 20 percent permit principals to request a doctor's note any time abuse of leave is suspected.

### Types of leave granted to Baltimore teachers

LEAVE TYPE	ALLOTMENT
Sick	15 (including 3 that may be used for personal leave)
Personal	1
Bereavement	5
Individual professional development	5
Religious	2
Total	28

*If a teacher used 80 percent of the available leave, s/he would be absent one day every two weeks.*

### II. Buying back unused leave

Baltimore's policy of buying back unused leave costs the district \$2.5 million a year.

#### Annual buyback

In addition to a generous leave allotment, the teachers' contract permits teachers to annually "buy back" three days of unused sick leave (receive a cash payment) at 100 percent of a teacher's daily pay rate. Teachers must have at least four days of remaining leave to qualify for this benefit.

Only about a quarter of the 101 districts in the TR<sup>3</sup> database offers an annual buy-back policy, while two-thirds offer a buyback at retirement. While a buyback is intended to incentivize strong attendance, Baltimore teachers

<sup>22</sup> Four bereavement days are for close family members, and one is for other family members.

are eligible even after taking as many as 11 of their 15 sick leave days. Of the districts that have an annual buyback, teachers on average cannot be absent more than 3 days to qualify, a far more restrictive policy than Baltimore's, where nearly two-thirds of teachers qualify.

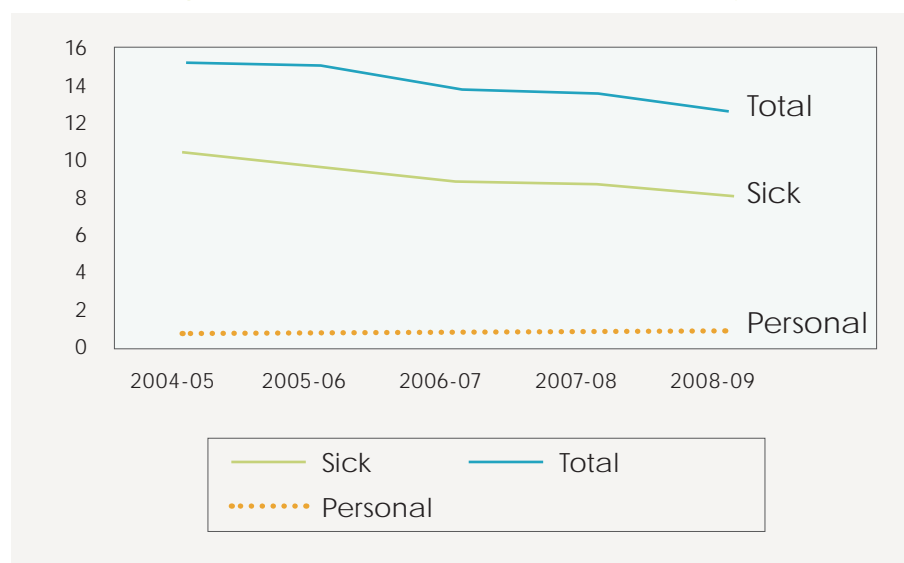
#### Buyback at retirement

At retirement, teachers can also buy back any unused leave (accumulated beyond the 3 days reimbursed annually) at 25 percent of their daily rate of pay. A teacher on the highest step (21) of the master's plus 30 salary lane who has 100 leave days accumulated could take home a \$10,000 bonus at retirement.<sup>23</sup>

### III. Attendance patterns

Teacher attendance in Baltimore has steadily improved in last four years.

#### Leave usage in Baltimore over the past four years



Source: Baltimore Public Schools

Here we explore attendance patterns in Baltimore.

#### Tenure status

While no linear correlation exists between years of teaching experience and teacher absences, one does exist between tenure status and teacher attendance. Baltimore's nontenured teachers are absent 25 percent less (9.9 days) than their tenured peers (12.4 days). These findings are consistent with research in other districts, particularly in Chicago, which has shown an inverse correlation between teacher tenure status and attendance—in other words, the more job protections teachers have the less their productivity (as measured by attendance).<sup>24</sup> In Baltimore, the difference in attendance patterns between tenured and nontenured teachers may also be due to fewer sick leave days granted for nontenured teachers.

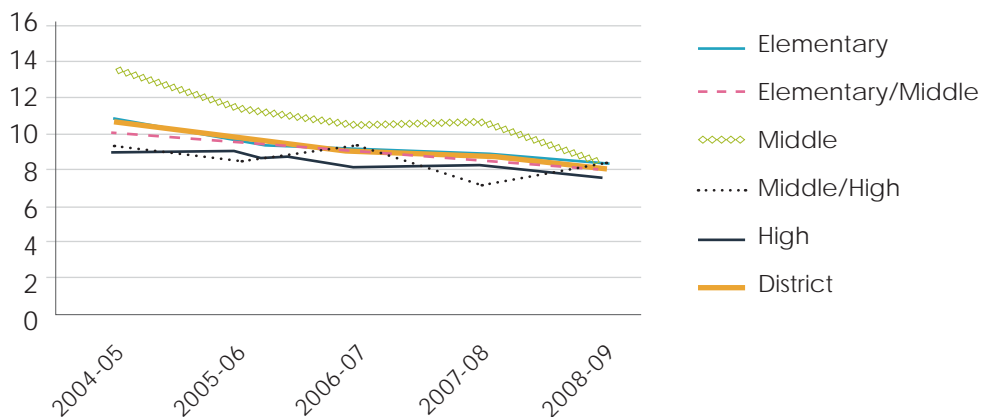
<sup>23</sup> There are 412 teachers on this step in the 2009–10 school year.

<sup>24</sup> Brian Jacob, *The Effect of Employment Protection on Worker Effort: Evidence from Public Schooling*, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2010.

### Grade level

In past years Baltimore's attendance rates varied widely depending on school grade level. Most notably, middle-school teachers took two to three more sick days per year than those in other grades. The 2008–09 school year was the first when middle-school teachers' attendance approximated that of their colleagues in other grades.

### Variations in sick leave usage by grade level



Source: Baltimore Public Schools

### Charter versus traditional public schools

Baltimore's charter school teachers are consistently absent one fewer days than teachers in its traditional public schools. Similar to the reasoning behind why nontenured teachers take fewer leave days, teachers in charter schools also have fewer job protections.

### Improving teacher attendance

In addressing absences, principals are the first and most important line of defense. Most good teachers have good attendance and do not need incentives to come to school due to a strong work ethic. Nonetheless, checks and balances are needed for teachers who abuse the system.

Economist Raegen Miller, a former teacher who studies teacher absenteeism, recommends that districts experiment with incentives aimed not only at minimizing absences among those who abuse the system, but also at improving the attendance of those who might try a little harder. A schoolwide incentive plan could also mobilize peer pressure for the cause. One approach is to give principals control over a fund used to pay substitute teachers. Funds remaining at the end of the school year would be rewarded to teachers with high attendance. Such a fund might also serve to alert districts of principals who tolerate frequent and excessive absenteeism.





## Recommendations for Baltimore City Public Schools



### 1. Reduce the number of sick leave days from 15 to 10.

Sick leave should be commensurate with the number of months worked, as it is in most school districts. Baltimore attendance records indicate that this policy change would be adequate to meet teachers' needs. Furthermore, the current allotment results in a pay-out burden on the district when teachers retire.



### 2. Have personal leave include time off for religious and other kinds of leave.



### 3. Do not allow teachers to qualify for the annual buyback if they were absent more than three days.

The buyback should be used to incentivize attendance, not as a perk for all teachers except the most chronically absent.

### 4. Closely monitor teacher attendance.

To determine whether and where patterns of sick leave abuse occur, Baltimore should implement a districtwide tracking system to enable principals to monitor teacher attendance patterns, including leaves of absences and leaves without pay. This system should include an analysis showing the relationship between absences and school performance; identifying schools and teachers with above-average absenteeism; and highlighting patterns, such as high absences on Mondays or Fridays.

### 6. Make teacher attendance a component of teacher evaluations.



# GOAL #10

## Indicators that the goal has been met

- i. The district's starting salary is competitive with other school districts in the area.
- ii. Additional compensation and financial incentives, including bonuses and tuition reimbursement, are geared to fill positions or retain teachers in high-needs schools and critical shortage content areas.
- iii. The salary schedule does not award permanently higher salaries for advanced degrees or credits.
- iv. Raises associated with experience are distributed relatively evenly throughout a teacher's career, with a large pay raise at tenure.
- v. Teachers reach their maximum salary in less than 15 years.

Teacher compensation in Baltimore is not being strategically used to improve teacher quality. Not only are teacher salaries uncompetitive with surrounding districts, but the structure fails to reward excellence, predicating raises on years of experience and the attainment of advanced degrees, not impact on student performance.

Baltimore will soon face significant competition from Washington, DC, which recently approved a new teacher contract whereby the most effective teachers may earn over \$100,000.

## I. Competitiveness with Nearby School Districts

Baltimore salaries are not keeping pace with nearby districts.

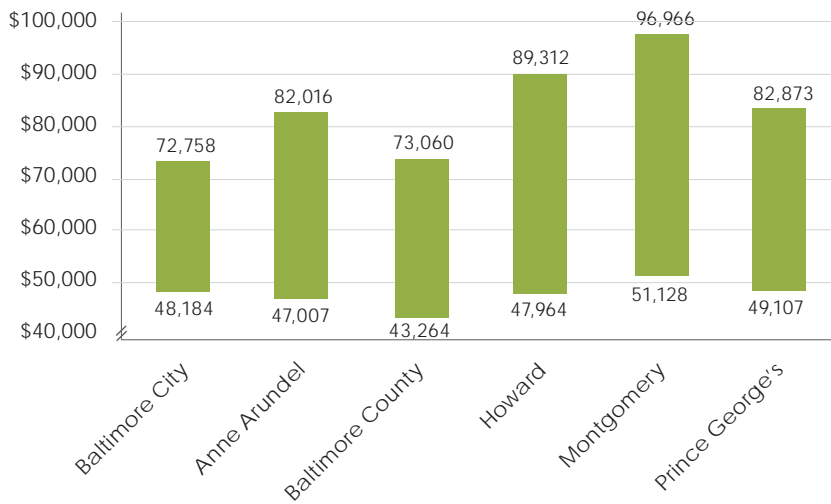
Although new teachers in Baltimore City earn salaries comparable to those of their peers in nearby districts, the salary structure does not keep pace with surrounding districts over a 30-year career. On average, Baltimore City salaries are \$4,731 below those in surrounding districts. A Baltimore City teacher's salary gradually declines with increasing experience.

## GOAL #10

Compensation is strategically targeted to attract and reward high-quality teachers, especially those in hard-to-staff positions.



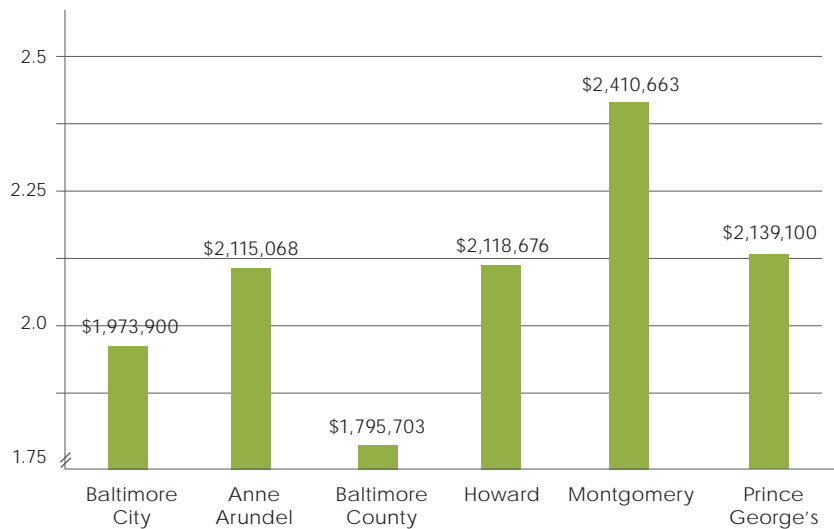
## Salary growth in Baltimore and surrounding districts



Source: Baltimore and surrounding districts' 2009–10 salary schedules (master's lane).

*Baltimore salaries start out comparable to surrounding districts, but its teachers do not experience the same growth as those in most surrounding school districts.*

## Earnings in Baltimore and surrounding districts over a 30-year career (in current dollars)



Source: Baltimore and surrounding districts' 2009–10 salary schedules (master's lane).

*Lifetime earnings are significantly lower for a Baltimore City teacher than for teachers in all surrounding districts but one. Over a 30-year career, teachers with a master's degree in Baltimore City earn \$141,000 less than those in Anne Arundel County, \$145,000 less than those in Howard County, \$437,000 less than those in Montgomery County and \$165,000 less than those in Prince George's County. NCTQ compares master's salaries because the vast majority of teachers have such degree, as required by Maryland law.*

## II. Degree-based compensation

Baltimore spends nearly \$31 million a year to compensate teachers for graduate coursework, even though research shows conclusively that advanced coursework does not make teachers more effective in the classroom.

### Graduate credits

While many assume advanced degrees (generally master's degrees) result in increased teacher effectiveness, education research concludes otherwise, particularly for degrees not related to the subject matter taught. The appendix provides a meta-analysis of this research, showing the weak to nonexistent correlation between teachers' advanced coursework and higher student achievement.

Why doesn't more education make a difference? It may be because school districts (and often states) routinely boost a teacher's pay for any advanced degree, regardless of its relationship to the subject taught.<sup>25</sup> Few teachers select a degree that will advance their subject-matter knowledge: nationally, even at the secondary level, fewer than one in four degrees is in the teacher's content area. At the elementary level, only 7 percent of these degrees are in a content area.<sup>26</sup>

Maryland is one of only five states that require teachers to earn a master's degree (or its equivalent) to advance from an initial license to a professional teacher license. Due to this requirement, it is no surprise that districts align their pay scales as they do. Baltimore has four pay rates for teachers: bachelor's, master's, master's plus 30 credits and doctorate. Baltimore caps salaries for teachers with a bachelor's after eight years (step 9), while teachers with a master's receive annual raises for 20 years. Most (69 percent) of Baltimore teachers have at least a master's degree and 16 percent have the coursework equivalent of two master's degrees. Baltimore spends nearly \$31 million (8.75 percent of its annual teacher payroll) on these pay differentials.

Baltimore is not alone in its how it structures teacher pay. All 24 Maryland school districts (and nearly every district in the country) have a similar pay structure, rewarding teachers for taking coursework. Some districts have as many as nine pay rates for teachers, varying according to how much coursework a teacher completes. Teachers in Seattle, for example, must take the equivalent of three master's degrees to qualify for the highest salary.

### Tuition subsidies

Not only does Baltimore pay higher salaries to teachers who have master's degrees, but it has one of the most generous tuition reimbursement policies among the 101 large districts in NCTQ's TR<sup>3</sup> database. (Only half the TR<sup>3</sup> districts have a tuition reimbursement program.) At a generous reimbursement rate of 75 percent of the tuition, Baltimore pays for up to 12

<sup>25</sup> Maryland requires teachers to complete a master's degree or its equivalent.

<sup>26</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2002* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2002, Table 32-2).

credit hours per school year in an educational field or related area that contributes toward a master's degree. Beyond a master's degree or equivalent, the city reimburses the teacher for 50 percent of the cost of any course.

During the 2008–09 school year, Baltimore spent \$1.6 million on tuition subsidies.

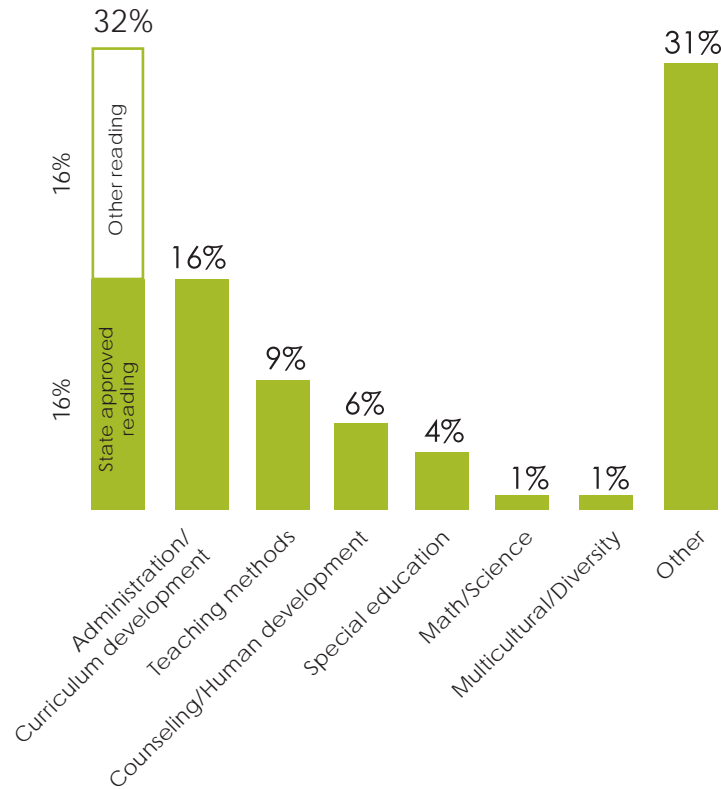
### How do Baltimore's policies compare with other school districts?

DISTRICT	TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT AVAILABLE	OTHER RELEVANT FACTS
Baltimore City	Up to 12 credits a year. Courses toward master's degree are reimbursed 75 percent; courses beyond master's degree or equivalent are reimbursed at 50 percent. Reimbursements in the 2008–09 school year ranged from \$204 to \$4,251. The average reimbursement per participating teacher was \$1,061.	Teachers with less than 5 years' experience who take tuition reimbursement must commit to teaching for two additional years; those with 5 or more years of experience must commit to teaching one additional year.
Anne Arundel	Up to 6 credits a year.	The coursework must be for certification renewal or part of the teacher's professional improvement plan.
Baltimore County	Up to 9 credits or a \$2,250 cap a year.	None stated.
Montgomery	Up to 9 credit hours reimbursed at 50 percent of in-state tuition at University of Maryland, College Park a year.	None stated.
Prince George's	Up to 12 credits at a rate of up to \$411 per credit (for an annual maximum of \$4,932).	None stated.
Washington, DC	\$1,800 cap a year.	Teachers must have a satisfactory evaluation to receive tuition reimbursement and must stay in the district for three years. Tuition coverage is available only to teachers working in a critical subject area (e.g., special ed, math, science, English as a second language) or toward a master's degree.

Baltimore’s tuition policy is structured as a credit cap, not a dollar cap. Not surprisingly, 50 percent of all reimbursed coursework is completed at Johns Hopkins, the most prestigious—and expensive—university in the area.

Although teachers receiving tuition reimbursement are required to remain in the district for at least a year and are supposed to return funds if they leave, the rule was largely unenforced until recently, according to the district.<sup>27</sup> As part of the teacher exit process, Baltimore City now claims to request refunds from teachers who voluntarily terminate their employment after being reimbursed.

Coursework taken by teachers



Source: NCTQ calculations based on data provided by Baltimore City Public Schools.

Most of the courses Baltimore City teachers took in 2008–09 related to classroom instruction. However, a sizeable portion (16 percent) was in education administration, and an equal portion was aimed at fulfilling the state’s requirement that all teachers take reading courses. Only 1 percent of the courses were in math or science and only 4 percent in special education.

<sup>27</sup> Teachers with fewer than five years of continuous service who voluntarily leave Baltimore are required to return 75 percent of tuition for the previous two school years. Teachers with more than five years of continuous service who voluntarily leave Baltimore are required to return 100 percent of tuition. Teachers who retire are not required to return tuition.

### III. Differential pay

Baltimore falls short on efforts to recognize excellence in its teachers.

Baltimore offers no financial incentives to attract teachers to hard-to-staff schools or subject areas. Also, the city has no strategy to reward excellence. A teacher who has shown dramatic gains in student achievement earns the same salary as one whose students chronically underperform.

#### Recommendations to the Baltimore City Schools

Baltimore's teacher salaries rank 18th out of 24 in the state. Too much emphasis is placed on earning additional degrees to earn higher pay, costing the district more than \$30 million a year. Excellence goes unrecognized: No means is available to recognize teachers who have a significant impact on student achievement, whether at the classroom or school level.

From a competitive standpoint, unless Baltimore acts soon to combat the potential loss of its most effective teachers to Washington, DC, it may face some real hardships in attracting teachers.



##### 1. Change the structure of raises.

Teacher salaries should be tied to teachers' responsibilities in a school and their effectiveness in the classroom. High-performing teachers should earn higher salaries. The highest pay raise should be provided early in the career, when a teacher earns tenure (see Goal 6).

Such a structure would encourage high-performing teachers to remain in the classroom.

Consider, for example, awarding a certain number of "chaired" positions to highly effective teachers in the district, with each chair paying \$100,000 or more per year. Another option is to move a teacher to a higher "step" on the salary schedule for consistently achieving objective measures of performance with students.



##### 2. Reconsider the value of the tuition reimbursement program.

Baltimore should assess which courses impact teacher performance in the classroom and use that information as a basis for reconsidering the tuition reimbursement program.



##### 3. Increase salaries and earnings potential so that Baltimore is more competitive with surrounding districts.

As one of the most challenging school districts in Maryland, the city must do more to attract, reward and retain excellent teachers.





## APPENDIX

### The Impact of Teachers' Advanced Degrees on Student Learning

*Metin Ozdemir, Ph.D., & Wendy Stevenson, Ph.D. UMBC*

An extensive review of the studies published in peer-reviewed journals, books, and reports was conducted. For the purpose of the literature search, we relied on multiple data bases including ERIC, EBSCOHOST, PsychInfo, and PsychLit. In addition, we carefully reviewed the reference sections of each article and chapter to locate additional sources. We also used online search engines such as Google and Yahoo search to locate updated publication lists and resumes of researchers who frequently publish in this field.

For the current meta-analysis, 17 studies (102 unique estimates) were selected as they have provided statistical estimates which allowed us to calculate effect sizes and re-compute the  $p$ -values for the meta-analysis.

All studies included in the meta-analysis were focusing on testing the effect of teachers' advanced degree (a degree beyond bachelor's degree) on student achievement measured as grade, gains in grade over one or two years, scores on standardized tests, and gains in standardized tests over one or two years. Teachers' advanced degrees included M.A. degree, M.A. + some additional coursework, and Ph.D. Student achievement variables included achievement in math, reading, and science areas.

Out of 102 statistical tests that were examined, 64.7% ( $n = 66$ ) of the estimates indicated that teachers advanced degrees did not have any significant impact on student achievement. On the other hand, 25.5% ( $n = 26$ ) indicated a negative effect, and 9.8% ( $n = 10$ ) suggested a positive effect of teachers' advanced degrees on student achievement.

It is important to note that all 10 of the estimates suggesting positive effect ( $p < .05$ ) of teachers' advanced degree on student learning were with analyses conducted on 6th and 12th grade students' math achievement. On the other hand, 23 negative effects ( $p < .05$ ) were reported by studies focusing on achievement in Kindergarten or 5th grade achievement in math and reading, and the other three were on 10th and 12th grade achievement. Studies which reported significance level at  $p < .10$  were not considered as reporting significant effect.

The studies examined in this meta-analysis had varied sample sizes. The minimum sample size was 199 whereas the maximum was over 1.7 million. Further analysis showed that there was no association between sample size and the direction of findings.



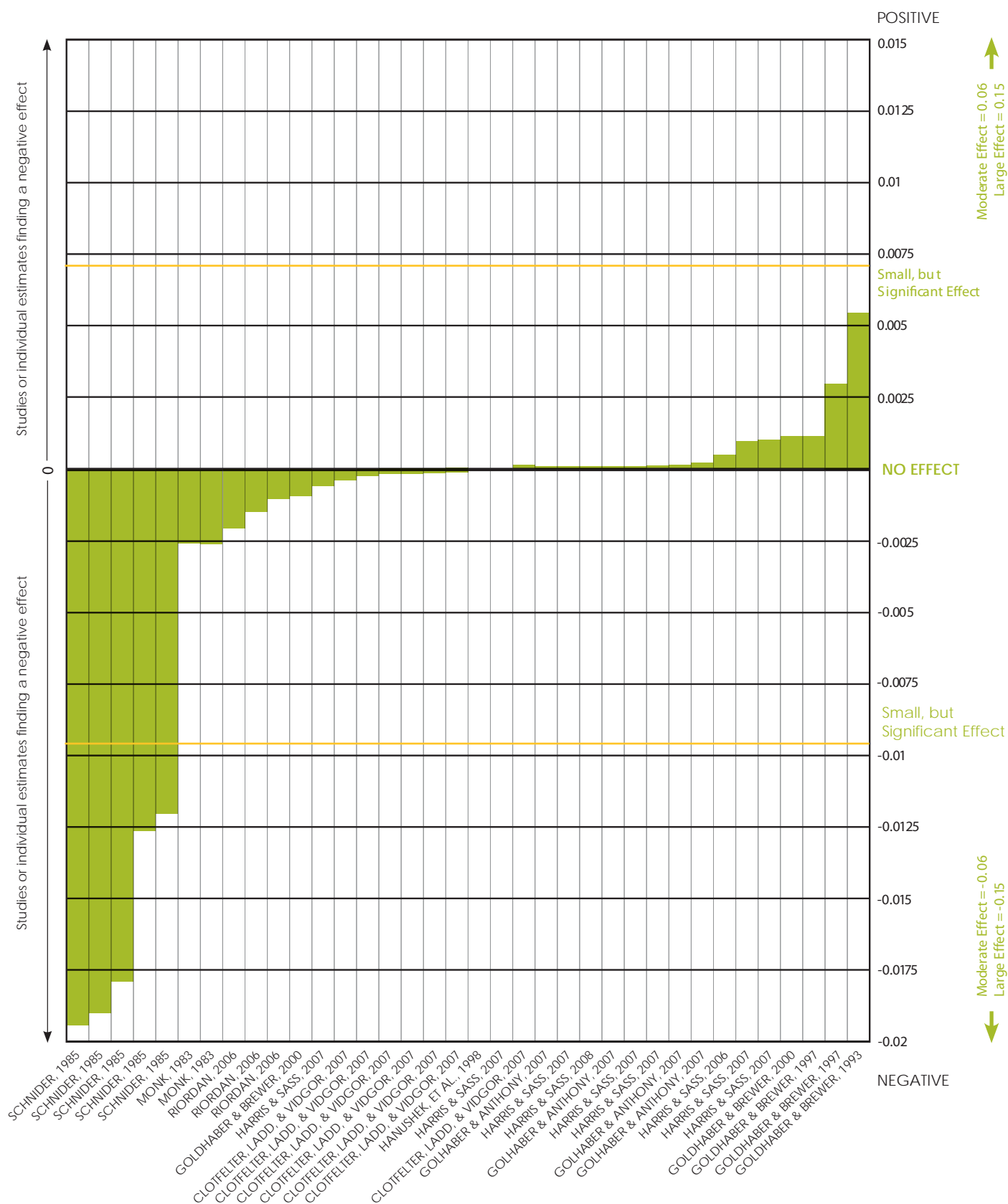
The average effect size estimate of all the 102 statistical tests was very low (.0012), which suggests that the impact of having advanced degree on student achievement is low. The highest effect size was .019, suggesting small effect.


One major concern regarding the studies reviewed in the current meta-analysis was that most studies to date did not identify the type of advanced degree they examined. In the current study, we identified only two studies (e.g., Goldhaber & Brewer, 1997; 2000) which examined the effect of subject-advanced degree on student learning. Specifically, Goldhaber & Brewer (1997) examined the effect of an M.A. in math on grade 10 math test scores. They reported a positive effect of teachers' M.A. degrees in math on math test scores. Similarly, Goldhaber & Brewer (2000) reported positive effect of an M.A. in math on math test scores of 12th grade students. Of note, both studies reported low effect sizes.

It is possible that categorizing different types of graduate degrees under a single category of "advanced degree" resulted in biased estimates of the impact of teachers' graduate training on student achievement. Future studies should examine the impact of subject-specific degrees on student achievement in the respective disciplines so that the findings would improve our understanding of the value of teachers' advanced degree in improving student learning. Given this major limitation of the literature, the findings of the current meta-analysis should be interpreted with caution.



# The Impact of Teachers' Advanced Degrees on Student Learning





National Council on Teacher Quality  
1420 New York Avenue, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20005

T 202.393.0020 F 202.393.0095

[www.nctq.org](http://www.nctq.org)

